



Soft Skills Training To Marginalized Youth: Issues And Challenges

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Preface

I am a student of Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi, pursuing my B.A. (Honours) in Economics. My interest lies in policy research and current issues, especially those related to the Indian and world economy and geo-politics. I intend to pursue a career in the civil services.

Rakshak Foundation is a non-profit organization, which researches different public policy issues and creates awareness about them. It works with volunteers around the world, dedicated to the propagation of social harmony, creating awareness on issues affecting Indians and NRI's living around the world and cultivating a sense of duty and responsibility amongst Indians living worldwide. The basic objective of Rakshak is to help strengthen the foundations of our society and bolster the confidence of a common man in the system by creating awareness about the issues affecting him/her.

The Rakshak Foundation works towards greater citizen participation in policy issues and this is the biggest factor which motivated me to apply for the internship. This internship has given me a chance to work under experts of the field, as my mentors and has provided me a unique opportunity to get to know more about and contribute to efficient policy making. It has helped me to garner in-depth knowledge about the project topic and the unique issues which India faces in this regard. The experience here has exposed interns to the real world of policy making and has given an opportunity to get into the nitty-gritty of policy research.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my mentor, Shri Atul Bhatnagar, COO of National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), who guided me through the course of this project and advised me on the research methodology to be adopted and specific issues to focus on. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my co-mentor, Ms Bhavna Chopra, who helped give proper direction to the research, with her vast expertise in the field of skill development.

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Executive Summary

India is at a historical juncture- it is witnessing a shift in the population structure. It is at a cusp stage between the 2 stages of demographic transition and is experiencing the transition stage. This transition stage offers India the unique opportunity of a 'demographic dividend'- increased labour supply. According to the Census of India, while the proportion of population in the under 14 age group declined from 41 per cent in 1961 to 35.3 per cent in 2001 (that is, by 5.7 percentage points), the proportion of population in the age group 15-59 increased from 53.3 per cent to 56.9 per cent (that is, by 3.6 percentage points) during the same period.

Thus, India's workforce is poised to grow and is expected to feed not only the expanding domestic industry but will be the supply of labour for the entire world, with the large share of working age population. In this respect, developing the quality of labour force is imperative. Along with quantity, quality is what will make a difference in the process of economic growth. Therefore, skill development is a very important goal for policy-makers for today. India's Government is awake to this fact and the Eleventh Plan emphasized this fact with the creation of a "Coordinated Action on Skill Development" with three-tier institutional structure consisting of (i) PM's National Council (ii) National Skill Development Coordination Board (NSDCB), (iii) National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was created in early 2008. The National Council spells out policy advice and direction in the form of "Core Principles" and has created a vision to create 500 million skilled people by 2022 through skill systems, which are inclusive. The second institution coordinates the skill development efforts of various Central Ministries/Departments and states. The third institution prepares comprehensive action plans and activities which promote PPP models of financing skill development. ^[4]

However, one aspect of skilling that has been ignored is the development of soft skills. Soft skills are as interpersonal, human or behavioural skills necessary for applying

technical skills and knowledge in the workplace. These are described by some authors as 'micro social skills'. They lead to enhancement of productivity of employees and are essential for career progression.

There are many gaps which exist in this regard, especially at the entry level which is the level which is being studied in this project. This project focuses on soft skills training to marginalized youth, who are taken to be those students who have dropped out of school and those who cannot afford to continue with higher education.

Soft skills training is not a part of the formal framework of training modules and course structures in training institutes. There is not any provision of life skills guidance at the school level. There is no existing framework to differentiate sector specific soft skills and incorporating them into training modules along with technical or vocational training. Alongside, many hurdles exist like the socio-economic background of school dropouts which does not provide a conducive environment for soft skill development and the demand-supply gap that exists for trainers in soft skills, both in terms of quality and quantity.

Some initiatives have been taken to address the gaps in skill development. There are many affiliates of NSDC which provide skill development services which incorporate soft skills training in the course modules. There are scattered NGO efforts and efforts of private enterprises as well which have been mentioned in the project. However, there is no uniform strategy towards this goal.

Thus, certain steps need to be taken to ensure better quality of skill development by incorporating soft skills training in the process of skilling India's workforce. The Government can work towards incorporating soft skills training in the curriculum for schools or take initiatives of partnership with local NGOs for the same. Successful models can be picked up and emulated in this regard. The next thing that needs to be looked at is the trainer training and certification framework. Government regulation, intervention in terms of policies is required in this regard. The NSDC can play a vital role by including soft skills training as part of the evaluation criteria of proposals for funding of skill development. Sector Skills Councils of the NSDC can play a major role

too by incorporating sector specific soft skills in the National Occupational Standards (NOS) being formulated.

The recommendations that have been made in this report are :

- Soft skills training provision can be made a part of proposal evaluation criteria of projects seeking NSDC funding.
- Soft skills learning be incorporated in school curriculum for wider reach.
- Enervating policy initiatives; using the National Occupational Standards (NOS) coming up. Ensuring proper certification systems and standardisation of curriculum.
- Trainer training centres (ToTs and Trainer Information Systems) to be built standardization of curriculum and bringing about proper regulation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background Information

1.1.1 Changing Population Structure : India currently is at a historical juncture- it is witnessing a shift in the population structure. It is at a cusp stage between the 2 stages of demographic transition and is experiencing the transition stage where the death rate has fallen and the birth rate is progressively falling due to declining fertility, leading to an increase in the working age population of the country (ages 15-59 years). The share of the child population (0-14 years) and the elderly (>60 years) is reducing, bringing with it a reduction in the dependency ratio. This offers a unique and immense opportunity to India in terms of accelerating economic growth. ^[1]

The unique opportunity is the demographic dividend available to India. The 'demographic gift', as referred to by scholars, is the increased labour supply. This can lead to enhanced productivity and enhanced incomes. Human capital can be developed due to increased expenditure on education and increase in standard of living. There is also greater projected expenditure on personal health and education, leading to healthier families, coupled with better health outcomes for women due to reducing fertility, which can lead to development of human capital as an asset. There is also the outcome of reduced dependency ratio due to reduces population of dependents- children and elderly, coupled with higher income possibilities. This can lead to higher savings in the economy, consequently leading to higher investment, resulting in the building of a virtuous cycle of economic growth and development.

According to the Census of India, while the proportion of population in the under 14 age group has declined from 41 per cent in 1961 to 35.3 per cent in 2001 (that is, by 5.7 percentage points), while the working age population has increased from 53.3 per cent to 56.9 per cent (that is, by 3.6 percentage points) during the same period. The youth segment of the population is estimated to peak at 484.86 million in 2030. ^[2]

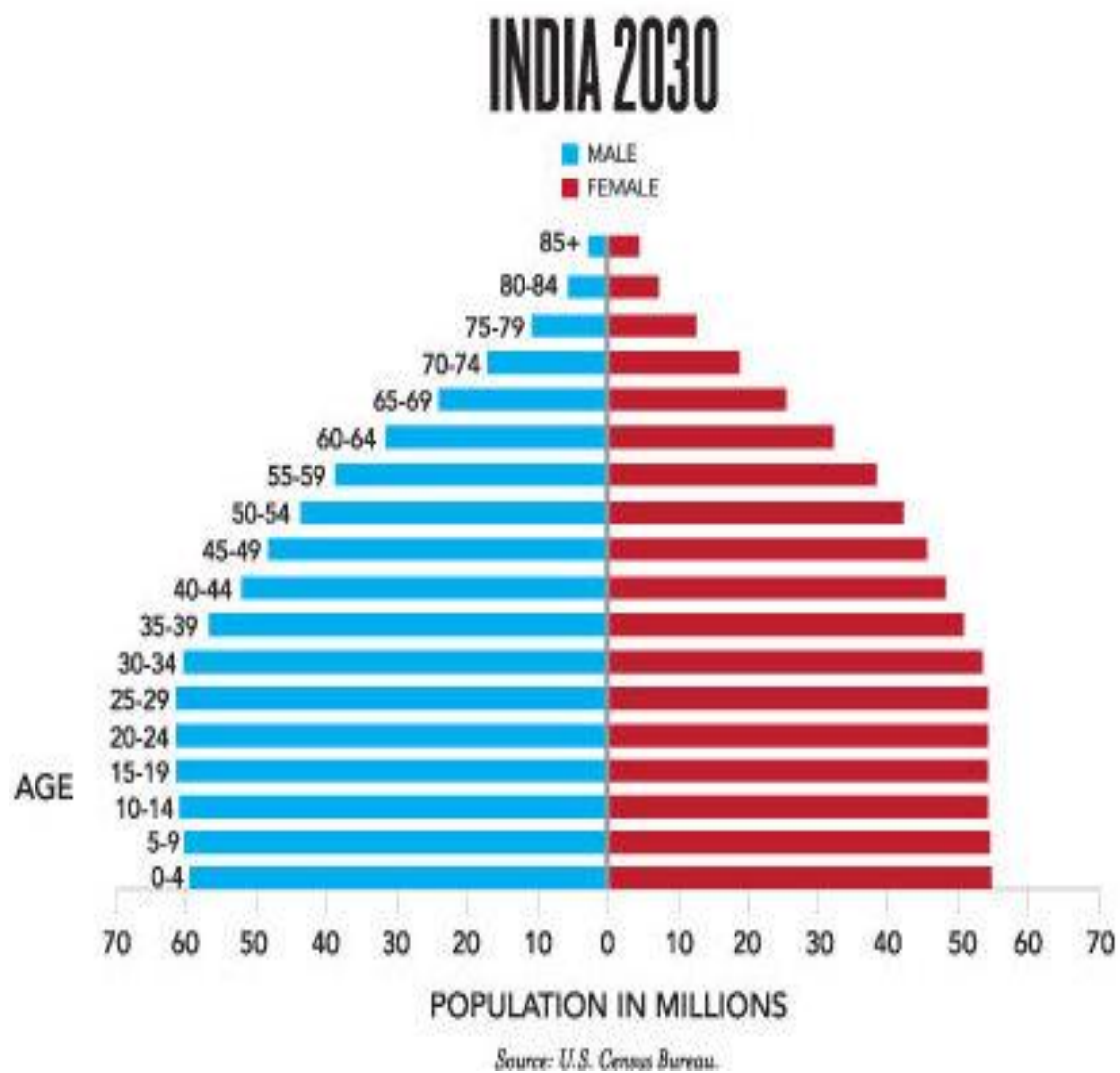


Figure 1- Demographic Bulge of India

Source- U.S. Census Bureau

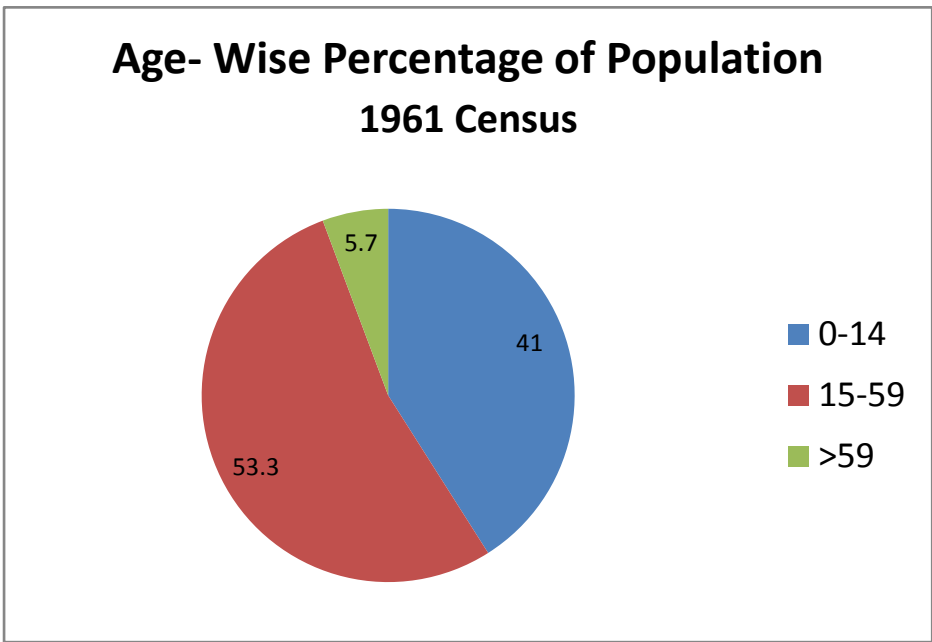


Figure 2- Age Wise Distribution of Population (1961)

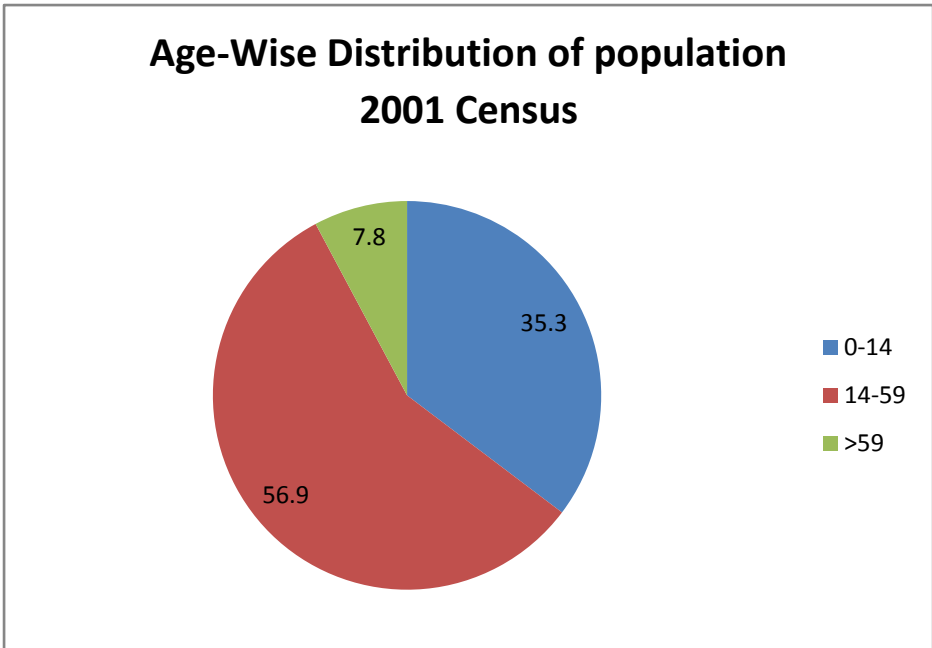


Figure 3 -Age Wise Distribution of Population- (2001)

This demographic fact has important implications for the labour market. According to official data, India's labour force, which was 472 million in 2006, is expected to be around 526 million in 2011 and 653 million in 2031. It is noteworthy that the growth rate of labour force will continue to be higher than that of the population until 2021. According to the Indian Labour Report, 300 million youth would enter the labour force by 2025, and 25 per cent of the world's workers in the next three years would be Indians. ^[3] Thus, we can see that the demographic dividend affords an opportunity to India to become the leader in labour supply in the global theatre. However, on the flip side, the fact that is to be considered is that this demographic window is open for a short time. The youth population of India will start tapering off by the end of this decade. India needs to step up the development of education and skill training in order to take advantage of the opportunities that this unique demographic situation has to offer. Otherwise, this population structure and growth will turn out to be a demographic burden. Infrastructure-both physical and social needs to be stepped up.

In view of this, an important fact to be considered is the phenomenon of high dropout rates in India. High number of dropouts acts a hindrance in the economic growth of the country- lower academic qualifications coupled with lack of proper skilling in the teaching modules, which poses a problem in ensuring productive employment.

1.1.2 Skill Development In India : Skill development is an important objective in this regard and has been recognized by the Government as seen by the Eleventh Plan which proposed the creation of a National Skill Development Mission. As a result, a "Coordinated Action on Skill Development" with three-tier institutional structure consisting of (i) PM's National Council (ii) National Skill Development Coordination Board (NSDCB), (iii) National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was created in early 2008. The National Council spells out policy advice and direction in the form of "Core Principles" and has created a vision to create 500 million skilled people by 2022 through skill systems, which are inclusive. The second institution coordinates the skill development efforts of various Central Ministries/Departments and states. The third institution prepares comprehensive action plans and activities which promote PPP models of financing skill development. ^[4] This shows that skill development is on the

main agenda of the Government with a more proactive role of the Government.

NSDC is unique in the sense that it is a PPP and its approach in skilling is different from the approach that was adopted earlier while this new organization looked at involving industry as partners to ensure better quality of training and placement. It catalyzes the creation of quality, for-profit vocational institutions by providing funding to scalable training initiatives and models. An evaluation process is followed to judge the viability of a project, which is phased and detailed, across six sets of criteria like employer view of demand for specific skills, ability to leverage partnerships, etc. It works towards developing appropriate business models to enhance, support and co-ordinate private sector initiatives. Besides that, its scope also includes advocacy programs and in-depth research to discover skill gaps in Indian workforce and developing accreditation norms. There is differentiated focus on 21 sectors across industries and service sectors to make each attractive to private sector investment.

1.1.3 Soft Skills : Soft skills are defined as interpersonal, human or behavioural skills necessary for applying technical skills and knowledge in the workplace. These are described by some authors as 'micro social skills'. The ambit covers interpersonal skills like communication skills, teamwork capability, conflict management, cultural awareness and negotiation skills, intrapersonal skills like sociability, honesty and integrity, courtesy, work ethic, empathy, responsibility and good manners and personal traits like imagination, curiosity, passion, persistence and determination.

Soft Skills are gaining importance in the job market as these are highly valued by employers and contribute to greater productivity. The Smyth County Industry Council, a governing body in the USA, recently conducted a survey, the results of which were compiled as the 'Workforce Profile' which found an across-the-board unanimous profile of skills and characteristics needed to make a good employee." . The Workforce Profile defined about sixty "soft skills", which employers look for in prospective candidates. They are applicable to all fields of work and are the "personal traits and skills that employers state are the most important when selecting employees for jobs of any type."

1. Math.

2. Safety.
3. Courtesy.
4. Honesty.
5. Grammar.
6. Reliability.
7. Flexibility.
8. Team skills.
9. Eye contact.
10. Cooperation.
11. Adaptability.
12. Follow rules.
13. Self-directed.
14. Good attitude.
15. Writing skills.
16. Driver's license.
17. Dependability.
18. Advanced math.
19. Self-supervising.
20. Good references.
21. Being drug free.
22. Good attendance.
23. Personal energy.
24. Work experience.
25. Ability to measure.
26. Personal integrity.
27. Good work history.
28. Positive work ethic.
29. Interpersonal skills.
30. Motivational skills.
31. Valuing education.
32. Personal chemistry.
33. Willingness to learn.
34. Common sense.

35. Critical thinking skills.
36. Knowledge of fractions.
37. Reporting to work on time.
38. Use of rulers and calculators.
39. Good personal appearance.
40. Wanting to do a good job.
41. Basic spelling and grammar.
42. Reading and comprehension.
43. Ability to follow regulations.
44. Willingness to be accountable.
45. Ability to fill out a job application.
46. Ability to make production quotas.
47. Basic manufacturing skills training.
48. Awareness of how business works.
49. Staying on the job until it is finished.
50. Ability to read and follow instructions.
51. Willingness to work second and third shifts.
52. Caring about seeing the company succeed.
53. Understanding what the world is all about.
54. Ability to listen and document what you have heard.
55. Commitment to continued training and learning.
56. Willingness to take instruction and responsibility.
57. Ability to relate to co workers in a close environment.
58. Not expecting to become a supervisor in the first six months.
59. Willingness to be a good worker and go beyond the traditional eight-hour day.
60. Communication skills with public, fellow employees, supervisors, and customers. ^[5]

1.2 Main Problems, their scope and impact on the society

1.2.1 High Dropout Rates in India : As India approaches a stage where it will be a major contributor to the world labour force and therefore, it is imperative to develop an adequately educated- skilled and qualified workforce. India faces a huge problem in

this regard due to the high rates of dropout.

Though progress on the education front has been made in India with literacy rates increasing from around 12% at the end of British rule to 74.04% according to the Census data for 2011. However, the phenomenon of dropping out remains a hurdle to progress of education in India. Human capital theory proposes labour productivity to be a direct function of the amount of schooling received. Higher schooling is expected to increase cognitive development and also contribute to economic modernisation [Colclough 1982].^[6] At the individual level, a student who does not complete school education severely restricts his adult earning potential. In any social interaction- operating a bank account, setting up of an enterprise, or taking advantage of a Government scheme, basic school education plays a role. Besides, dropouts are less likely to find and hold jobs that pay them enough to keep them off public assistance.

According to the 2006 (December 23) EPW paper by Amit Choudhary, dropout rates in India have been estimated as follows:

Dropout Rates at Primary, Elementary and Secondary Stages (in percentage):

	1960-61	1970-71	1980-81	1990-91	1992-93	1999-2000*	2001-02*
Classes I-V							
Girls	61.7	64.5	56.2	40.1	43.8	38.7	38.4
Boys	70.9	70.9	62.5	46	46.7	42.3	39.9
Total	64.9	67	58.7	42.6	45	40.3	39
Classes I-VIII							
Girls	75	74.6	68	59.1	58.2	52	52.9
Boys	85	83.4	79.4	65.1	65.2	58	56.9
Total	78.3	77.9	72.7	60.9	61.1	54.5	54.6
Classes I-X							
Girls	NA	NA	79.8	67.5	70	66.6	64.2

Boys	NA	NA	86.6	76.9	77.3	70.6	68.6
Total	NA	NA	82.5	71.3	72.9	68.3	66

*-provisional

Source- Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India ^[7]

The reasons for school dropouts in India are many, but can be classified into three broad groups:

- (i) family related reasons- parental education, socio-economic status, disadvantaged groups
- (ii) school-related reasons- attendance, academic achievement, interest in school and school work
- (iii) personal reasons- discipline level and other extenuating circumstances like marriage, etc., gender of the child

Thus, there is a serious problem of a high dropout rate in India which has been recognized by the Government as well, as seen by one of the 27 targets of the Eleventh Five Year Plan on Education- Reduction in the dropout rates of children at the elementary level from 52.2 per cent in 2003–04 to 20 per cent by 2011–12 (Mukherjee and Sikdar, 2011). The dropout reducing schemes have increased from 7 in 2007-08 with an allocation of 61794.2 million (RE) rupees to 8 in 2011-12 with an allocation of 103,047.3 million rupees (RE). ^[8]

1.2.2 Insufficient and Inadequate Soft Skills Training : Soft skills play an important role in entry-level success. It is essential for selection through the interview process and future productivity and career progression.

However, the facilities and avenues for development of the same are very limited. There is a dearth of training facilities and institutions for soft skills training, especially at the entry-level; for job profiles open to school dropouts.

There is a gap in the demand and supply of trainers for behavioural skills trainers and without any formal or reliable and recognized institutional certification, this problem is further exacerbated.

Also, soft skills training is not formally incorporated in the existing education or training structure. There is no arrangement for compulsory life skills training in schools or colleges in the country which leads to differences from school to school, especially private and Government schools and thus, the target sector, is left behind. In training institutes like ITIs, enhancement of vocational skills or technical skills is concentrated on for ensuring basin employability.

Thus, there is an overall gap in the expectation of employers and need of a progressing economy and the skill sets possessed by potential employees entering job market, especially with regard to soft skills.

1.3 Goals and Objectives

- Explaining the importance of soft skills in the employment scenario, with special reference to entry-level jobs. Explaining how soft skills are necessary and desirable not only for the higher level management roles but also for the lower and middle level employees

- Identifying the hurdles which exist in soft skills training in India :
(i) related to difficulty in soft skills training to target sector which might exist due to lack of adequate response from students since the link between soft skills and employability is indirect as compared to the direct link between technical or hard skills and employment opportunities.

Also, the socio-economic background to which the target sector of school dropouts belong does not provide an environment which is conducive to the development of soft skills.

The present formal education (schooling) framework also doesn't incorporate soft skills learning

- (ii) related to the dearth of soft skills trainers in the country, especially for

training for entry-level jobs. There is a demand-supply gap.

- Identifying the set of soft skills which are necessary for employees in the present employment scenario, with special reference to two sectors- automobile /auto component from manufacturing basket and organized retail from the services basket
- Proposing measures to enhance the soft skills training scenario in India.
Giving suggestions to bridge the demand-supply gap of trainers in soft skills.
Suggest training ideas and frameworks which incorporate soft skills training at different levels of the learning chain.

2. Methodology

2.1 Literature Search

Revisiting Dropouts: Old Issues, Fresh Perspectives

Amit Choudhury^[7]

Studied in detail about the education scenario in India with respect to the dropout ratio. Since the study has to concentrate on the marginalized youth i.e. school-leavers (who have not passed 12th standard), it was imperative to first examine the situation which exists in India. The phenomenon of dropping out remains a hurdle to progress of education in India. Human capital theory proposes labour productivity to be a direct function of the amount of schooling received and hence the phenomenon of dropping out has an impact on the economic progress. Besides increasing expenditure on schooling and widening its access, it is also essential to create a supplementary network to provide training to dropouts so that they can avail of economic opportunities.

Approach Paper of 12th Plan ^[4]

Initiation of preliminary background research about the Government policy on skill development. The 12th Plan which talks about going ahead from the Eleventh Plan which had favored the creation of a comprehensive National Skills Development Mission. As a result, a "Coordinated Action on Skills Development" with three-tier institutional structure consisting of (i) PM's National Council (ii) National Skills Development Coordination Board (NSDCB) (iii) National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) was created in 2008. The first institution spells out policy advice and direction in the form of "Core Principles" and has created a vision to create 500 million skilled people by 2022 through skill systems, which are inclusive. The second institution coordinates the skill development efforts of various Central Ministries/Departments and states. The third institution prepares comprehensive action plans and activities which promote PPP models of financing skill development. This shows that skill development is on the main agenda of the

Government with a more proactive role of the Government.

Innovative Secondary Education for Skills Enhancement (ISESE) skills synthesis paper- Skills for employability in Asia and Africa- Burnett, Nicholas and Jayaram, Shubha (Oct 2012)^[9]

This paper talked about the changing employment scenarios and employer demands in the developing countries. Different and innovative skill development programmes being undertaken in various African countries and South Asian countries were mentioned and explained.

Policy on Sector Skills Councils and the newsletters for the same available on the NSDC Website^[10]

The policy included the approach paper, the proposal submission guidelines, the newsletters which recorded the initiatives taken, the achievements and the planned actions for the future. The reports and policy guidelines helped to get an idea about the working and the scope of Sector Skill Councils; the new National Occupational Standards which were being formulated and the increasing partnership with concerned industry for skill development.

'Need For Soft Skills Development Towards Managerial Efficiency', International Journal Of Management Research And Review^[5]

This report contained the Workforce Profile which helped to give an idea about the soft skills which are the most important and are looked for in employees. The most important ones were also listed in the end. It helped to formulate a methodology to go about the estimation of industry specific skills and identify the most relevant ones.

TISS Report- 'Employment in Retail Sector: A comparison of organized and unorganized retail in India' ^[15]

The share of organized retail is steadily increasing with the rise of shopping malls, specialty stores, discount store, department stores, hypermarkets, supermarkets and convenience stores. There is a shortage of labour supply and high rates of attrition are major problems faced by employers. A part of this can be attributed to lack of adequate training of employees. Skill requirements of organized retail entail a

greater emphasis on soft skills. Desirable personality traits as recorded from employers were smartness, presentable appearance, good communication skills, eagerness to learn and improve and a positive attitude for catering better to customer needs. In-house training is provided to recruits.

Course Curricula short term courses on based on Modular Employment Skills (MES) in Retail Sector prepared by Directorate General of Employment and Training, Ministry of Labour and Employment ^[16]

The report contains detailed curriculum for development of vocational and soft skills for entry level employees in the organized retail sector. Job profiles described are door-to-door salesperson, sales person and senior sales person. The report greatly helped to form the questionnaire for this sector.

The Human Resource and Skill Requirements in the Auto and Auto Components Sector (2022)- A Report^[17]

Report gives the conclusion that The Indian Automotive Industry faces a challenge in terms of developing human resource skills to achieve the said growth targets. The problems are twofold –

- India needs to train manpower to cater to the higher employment demand from the Indian Auto Industry;
- As India embraces global technology, skill enhancement becomes mandatory to improve technology and productivity.

The Human Resource and Skill Requirements in the Organized Retail Sector (2022)- A Report^[18]

The report talks about the functional gaps in skill training and development and the urgent need to step up facilities to train personnel in order to meet requirements of the increasing industry capacity.

Bridging the skill gap: Opportunities for skills training in India's organized retail sector- Paper at GSEI (Global Strategies for an Emergent India) 2012 conference^[19]

This report gives the overview of the employment landscape for the organized retail

sector. It contains surveys of top employers and assessment of employee quality and the problems faced by both employers and employees. Skill development in this sector with regards to non-vocational skills needs to be taken.

The Importance of Soft Skills In Entry-Level Employment and Post-Secondary Success: Perspectives from Employers and Community Colleges^[20]

Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) is a non profit organization that creates opportunities for people to support themselves and their families through living-wage careers. SJI offers low-income individuals training that leads to college credentials in growing local industry sectors. A hallmark of SJI's program is the integration of soft skills into their training curriculum. The study had conducted a study of 200 employers in the relevant area and found that 75% of them considered soft skills as relevant as technical skills, if not more. It had a detailed analysis of the different core sectors of SJI and also contained a survey of community colleges and training institutions in the area and dealt with the training methods. The report was very helpful in getting an insight into the research methodology that should be adopted for my study.

Soft And Hard Skills Development: A Current Situation In Serbian Companies Verica Babic and Marko Slavkovic^[21]

The paper gave a formal definition of soft skills and examined the emphasis placed by employers on hard(technical) and soft skills and the type of soft skills demanded. It uses statistical tools to determine the most important variables for soft skills. The study gave an insight on how to examine data collected from survey and what should the questions to be probed be.

Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children James Heckmen^[24]

The paper discusses the how skill formation across the life cycle is highly influenced by the early environments a child faces. Early inputs determine the productivity of later inputs. Heckmen's studies deal with non-cognitive skills and their impact on employment outcomes. Adult success variables in terms of employment and income outcomes as well as career progression were studied.

Beyond College for All- Career Paths for the Forgotten Half

James Rosenbaum^[25]

The report gone through mentioned the employability gap which exists in most of the countries in the world in terms of high school graduates being unable to get quality jobs. This is mainly due to a skills gap which exists at that level. The study undertaken concentrated on the United States.

Building Trainers' Skills in Vocational Employability

NSDC Report^[26]

It examines the scenario of trainers' skills as a critical player in the vocational employability space and details functioning of the training institutes across categories to generate learning and recommend a roadmap to develop trainers' capacity.

2.2 Field Visits

2.2.1 Field Visit to Gras Academy, Ghaziabad Centre

Met and interviewed the centre in-charge, Shri Sunil Kumar Rai and the trainer for their GCPA course (accountancy), Shri Neeraj Yadav. Also met trainers of other courses like computer hardware and networking and personality development.

Details are as follows:

Goals of the Visit

1. To get an insight into the training modules of the Gras Academy
2. To get an insight into soft skill courses' demand by students at Gras Academy
3. To get an insight into trainers' attitudes towards soft skills and views on incorporation of soft skills in regular courses and general view on soft skills development
4. To get information about importance of soft skills in placements and extent of emphasis on soft skills during placements
5. To get information about soft skills required in different sectors

6. To get an insight into demand-supply gap of trainers in soft skills- quantity and/or quality-wise

2.2.2 Field Visit to NYJL NYJ Centre, Paharganj

Met and interviewed the centre in-charge, Ms Shreya Singh who gave an overview of the training structure and the hurdles faced in the training process. Also interacted with trainers for different courses and got to know more about the extent to which soft skills are emphasized in different courses. Besides that, got an idea about students' expectations and perspective during the interaction with students.

Goals of the Visit :

1. To get an insight into training modules of NYJL Centres,
2. To get an insight into soft skill courses' demand by students at NYJL Centres.
3. To get an insight into trainers' attitudes towards soft skills and views on incorporation of soft skills in regular courses and general view on soft skills development.
4. To get information about importance of soft skills in placements and extent of emphasis on soft skills during placements.
5. To get information about soft skills required in different sectors.
6. To get an insight into demand-supply gap of trainers in soft skills- quantity and/or quality-wise.

2.2.3 Field Visit to Aide et Action iLead Centre, Khajoori Khas

Met the trainers for various courses like IT and ITeS, auto mechanic, Customer Relation Representative and Spoken English and Personality Development (SEPD). The in-charge for administration, Mr Rakesh Jha who explained the details of the working of the centre as well as courses of funding, the courses provided, the mobilization process as well as the pre-placement assistance and post-placement support and monitoring which is present.

It was a two-phased visit which also saw interaction with the students to gauge the effectiveness and impact of these programmes. It afforded a successful case study in terms of training, both for technical skills and life skills.

Goals of the visit :

1. To get an insight into the training modules of the Aide et Action centres and see how it is different from the other vocational training institutes in terms of incorporation of the element of social welfare.
2. To get information on soft skills training or any other special courses being run as independent courses or supplementary programmes.
3. To get insights on trainers' attitudes towards soft skills development and the importance of the same.
4. To get insights into students' perception of soft skills training through personality development courses and incorporation in other courses.
5. To get insights into the hurdles faced in the training of students - both for technical skills and soft skills and gauging the difference, if any.
6. To get insights on trainers' recruitment process
7. To interact with students to get their perspective on soft skills training and the hurdles faced by them in the process of skilling and training.

2.2.4 Field Visit to Deepalaya School and Vocational Training Centre, Okhla

Met the project coordinator, Mr Shakti Anand who explained the training module followed by the organization. The course for vocational training included training in computer skills, communication skills and life skills. There were 2 age-groups catered to and placement assistance provided to the appropriate group. There was also a school as well as a Remedial Education Centre(REC) run by the organization to bring children of adjoining colonies into mainstream in terms of education and the school level curriculum also included life skills training.

Goals of the Visit :

1. To get information about the training modules of the vocational training centre and details on the structure of the course on life skills.
2. To interact with the students of the centre to gauge the effectiveness of the programme as well as get insights into its relevance.
3. To get details of the placement assistance provided and the records of placements.
4. To study the approach adopted by the organization in community mobilization to motivate children as well as adults to join programmes for education and skilling.
5. To get information about the school level curriculum and the modules adopted for life skills training in schools.

2.3 Surveys

A survey to gauge the attitudes of industry was floated among various companies and industry bodies. Industry bodies like SIAM (Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers) for the automobile sector and the ASDC (Automotive Skill Development Council) for the same sector and RASCI (Retailers Association's Skill Council of India) were helpful in reaching the companies.

The questionnaire sought to gauge the level of importance placed by companies on soft skills for entry level positions, the weight age given to different skills, the kind of training offered by companies themselves and the performance of employees post-training. It was limited to 2 sectors- auto industry and organized retail. The findings are listed in the relevant section.

A questionnaire was prepared for the trainers and was used during field visits. This helped to gauge the training methods being followed and the extent of incorporation of soft skills. Trainers were asked about

- (i) training modules followed and course structure
- (ii) need for incorporation of soft skills in the course structure
- (iii) extent of incorporation of soft skills training in the course structure
- (iv) whether all courses had soft skills training included or whether the course was

separate or a mix of both

- (v) the demand for these courses
- (vi) the response of students to soft skills training
- (vii) the hurdles faced during training
- (viii) the process of training of trainers in soft skills and their certification
- (ix) demand-supply gap of soft skills trainers
- (x) placement situation after course completion- if assistance is provided or not
- (xi) briefs by placement partners about desirable skills, if any
- (xii) overcoming hurdles related to training
- (xiii) feasibility and desirability of an integrated training programme at school
- (xiv) personal insights on training, having experience over the years

Another study that was done was an analysis of requirements in the jobs advertised for in various job search and assistance websites. The purpose was to show the emphasis on skills beyond technical skills or hard skills specific to job profile advertised for. Skills like basic computer skills and communication skills are in demand and valued as much as educational qualifications and hard skills. The survey was done for entry level jobs requiring no work experience and limited to sectors which did not require higher level skills or higher level of education. It was mainly done to estimate the importance of soft skills for entry level jobs and runs through 50 job profiles.

2.4 Meetings and Interviews

2.4.1 Discussion with Mentor* :

In the first meeting with mentor, Shri Atul Bhatnagar, COO of NSDC, the discussion centred around the background of the project and what is required. The discussion began with a description of vision and mission of National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), the initiatives being taken by the NSDC for skill development in the country and the urgent need for India to invest in skill development, in view of expanding industry and its requirements. Labour force is supposed to be the oil for continued economic progress. Special focus needs to be given to soft skill development which is ignored, by and large, in present circumstances, especially for entry-level jobs. They contribute to the efficiency of employees and save the cost of in-house training

given by companies at repeated intervals. The policy on Sector Skills Councils was discussed and the concept of National Occupational Standards (NOS) introduced. The skill sets needed by different sectors were discussed broadly.

The second meeting mainly concentrated on the research methodology and the centres to be chosen for field visits and contacts for reaching the target population for the survey were discussed. Advice was given on how to go about the survey and the people to be contacted. The task to go through and analyze the job profiles advertised for in various job search sites was given. A possible policy recommendation was discussed in terms of feasibility.

(*- Please refer Appendix A for details*)

2.4.2 Discussion with others :

Date	Name	Designation	Institution	Topic of Discussion
6/6/13	Ms Jennifer Pritchard	Research Associate, Seattle Jobs Initiative	Seattle Jobs Initiative	Research methodology adopted in the study on the importance of soft skills undertaken by SJI
8/6/13	Professor Marko Slavkovic	Professor, Faculty of Economics	Kragujevac University, Serbia	Research methodology to be adopted, with specific reference to questionnaire to be administered
9/6/13	Ms Peggy Klaus	Soft Skills Consultant	-	Importance of soft skills and survey done

				in her book, 'The Hard Truth About Soft Skills'; how soft skills are very much in demand by employers
25/6/13	Ariaravelan K.	Project Coordinator	Aparajitha Foundation ,	Details about the successful TTT project in Tamil Nadu
2/7/13	Mr T.A. Padmanaban	PR Department, TTT Project	Aparajitha Foundation	Details about the history as well as implementation of the TTT programme in Tamil Nadu.

3. Current NGO and Government Efforts

1. Government run ITIs- These Industrial Training Institutes have seen the PPP model introduced for their administration from 2007^[14]. Out of 1896 ITIs, 500 were identified as Excellence Centres and given Central Funding or funds from the World Bank. The remaining 1396 ITIs saw a change as Central funding was provided to improve the infrastructure and shift focus from one particular trade to training across all sectors. Thus, skill development infrastructure was improved. With the PPP model, new Institutional Management Committees (IMCs) came into being which had private sector industrial representatives participating in the administration of the institutes.

2. Initiative for private ITIs- The Central Government's Skill Development Initiative in 2007 caused the number of privately run ITIs to increase from under 2000 in 2007 to near 6498 in three years. The number of vocational training providers increased and so did the number of trades being taught in the institutes.

3. The three-tier institutional structure for skill development- The Eleventh Plan which proposed the creation of a National Skill Development Mission. As a result, a "Coordinated Action on Skill Development" with three-tier institutional structure consisting of (i) PM's National Council (ii) National Skill Development Coordination Board (NSDCB), (iii) National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was created in early 2008. The National Council spells out policy advice and direction in the form of "Core Principles" and has created a vision to create 500 million skilled people by 2022 through skill systems, which are inclusive. The second institution coordinates the skill development efforts of various Central Ministries/Departments and states. The third institution prepares comprehensive action plans and activities which promote PPP models of financing skill development. ^[4] This shows that skill development is on the

main agenda of the Government with a more proactive role of the Government.



Figure 4- Skill development initiative of the Government

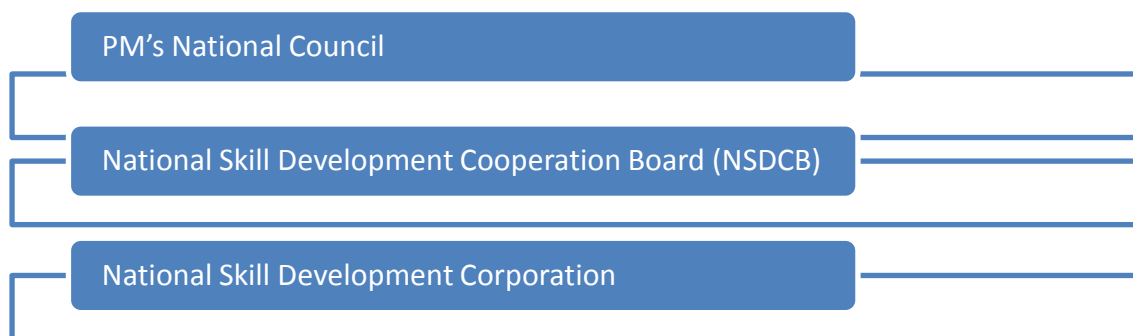


Figure 5- Three-Tier Institutional Structure

NSDC is unique in the sense that it is a PPP and its approach in skilling is different from the approach that was adopted earlier while this new organization looked at involving industry as partners to ensure better quality of training and placement. It catalyzes the creation of quality, for-profit vocational institutions by providing funding to scalable training initiatives and models. An evaluation process is followed to judge the viability of a project, which is phased and detailed, across six sets of criteria like employer view of demand for specific skills, ability to leverage partnerships, etc. It works towards developing appropriate business models to enhance, support and co-ordinate private

sector initiatives. Besides that, its scope also includes advocacy programs and in-depth research to discover skill gaps in Indian workforce and developing accreditation norms. There is differentiated focus on 21 sectors across industries and service sectors to make each attractive to private sector investment.

NSDC has been supporting the creation of companies that are providing vocational training all across the country, on a profitable basis. The business model is as follows: NSDC finances the company start-ups through a combination of debt and equity, the debt part of which is to be re-paid by the business venture-cum-VTP over a number of years by providing vocational training to youth on a fee-paying basis. As many as 26 companies have started providing such training, all of which are required by agreement with NSDC to ensure 70% of their trainees get placed in industry.^[14]

4. Partners and Affiliates of NSDC- Various partners and affiliates funded by NSDC run programmes for training in different sectors, many of them specifically cater to the target sector of school dropouts, running courses in various job-oriented sectors. These courses enable students to get entry level jobs in various sectors like hospitality, retail, accountancy, BPOs, automobile and auto components. Even the unorganized sector is catered to. These organizations provide placement assistance too in some instances. A case in point is the Gras Academy, which has centres all across the country. It runs courses in electronics hardware, accountancy, organized retail, hospitality, etc. and runs separate courses for communication skills and personality development. Soft skills training development is incorporated in all courses to enable students to face and do well in interviews and later in their jobs. Measures are taken by trainers to make students realize the value of soft skills and the trainers themselves are chosen after a rigorous selection procedure.

Another initiative is the NIIT Yuva Jyoti programme. Courses are provided in sectors like banking, retail, IT, BPOs. The main area of focus is service sector. Placement assistance is provided using NIIT's existing network and there are local, regional and national placement teams. Soft skills training is incorporated in all job-oriented courses. English speaking skills are emphasized upon. Other skills like personal grooming, discipline, punctuality are stressed upon through compulsory rules which need to be adhered to. Also, counselling sessions are organized for parents and students separately to guide them through the training and final placement process. The

placement process is tracked to ensure that each student gets to appear in a minimum of 3 interviews, preferably from different types of organisations. So far, less than 20% need the 3rd interview. The trainers are posted to various centres after a rigorous training and testing procedure, including taking mock lectures at NIIT. They are certified and made experts of the courses they are to take in the centres.

There are many other affiliates like the EMPOWER Centres, B-Able, JetKing, Gram Tarang, etc. which run centres across the country. Most partner centres cater to the marginalized youth, people who have dropped out of school or cannot afford to go to college. They also cater to those sections who want to equip themselves with adequate career enhancing skills which are not harnessed and focused on in college.

5. Unique initiatives with partnership of State Governments and NGOs- A case in point is that of the Tamil Nadu Government launching a pilot project in collaboration with an NGO, Aparajitha Foundation to start soft skills training in schools from class 6 onwards.^[22] The project was called Thalir Thiran Thittam (A Transformational Change Through Awareness). It was envisioned to support students with consistent inputs on skills and attitudes to ensure confidence-building and personality development of students in Government schools belonging to the lower income sections of the society. It would help students to compete with students from more privileged backgrounds and private schools having extracurricular activities incorporated in their curriculum. It also entailed training of teachers prior to launching of the programme in the school. This ensured that the programme was efficiently implemented and addressed the problem of demand-supply gap of trainers for life skills. The initiative began as a

pilot project in 5 school of Madurai district and slowly spread to more schools across the state. The programme was supported by the Government and as it spread, it got corporate sponsorships from companies like Cavinkare Limited, TVS and Sons Limited and Lanxess.

6. In Andhra Pradesh, soft skills training was incorporated into the formal syllabus of the Universities of the state through collaboration between the colleges and universities and a private enterprise, Personalitree Academy Limited.^[23] Workshops are held which

concentrate on development of both hard and soft skills. Soft skills are concentrated upon since they are required for successful placements and careers. Pre-assessment is provided to gauge the aptitude and skills of the individual followed by the programme, which ends with a post-assessment session in which the changes brought about are measured. Students are groomed to face interviews and are taught office etiquettes, mailing etiquettes. Personality development is a vital part of the course structure.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Findings from the literature

- Government efforts for skill development were identified. The most prominent among them is the creation of a three-tiered institutional structure in the 11th Plan. The Eleventh Plan had favoured the creation of a comprehensive National Skills Development Mission. As a result, a "Coordinated Action on Skills Development" with three-tier institutional structure consisting of (i) PM's National Council (ii) National Skills Development Coordination Board (NSDCB) (iii) National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) was created in 2008. The first institution spells out policy advice and direction in the form of "Core Principles" and has created a vision to create 500 million skilled people by 2022 through skill systems, which are inclusive. The second institution coordinates the skill development efforts of various Central Ministries/Departments and states. The third institution prepares comprehensive action plans and activities which promote PPP models of financing skill development. This shows that skill development is on the main agenda of the Government with a more proactive role of the Government.^[4]
- The extent of the changing population structure was estimated. Demographic transition offers India a unique opportunity to accelerate economic growth as industry expands and Indian labour force becomes caters to the demand of not only domestic but also global players. There is the possibility of higher savings, better health and education outcomes for which there is an urgent need to invest in the social infrastructure of the country. Skill development is an important goal in this regard since a skilled workforce can drive the process of economic growth further and realize the demographic dividend and prevent a demographic

burden from being created.

- India has achieved better education outcomes slowly and steadily since Independence. Literacy rates have seen an upward trend over consecutive Censuses. However, a major hurdle posed is the high dropout rates which prevail in India. Since the study has to concentrate on the marginalized youth i.e. school-leavers (who have not passed 12th standard), it was imperative to first examine the situation which exists in India. The phenomenon of dropping out remains a hurdle to progress of education in India. Human capital theory proposes labour productivity to be a direct function of the amount of schooling received and hence the phenomenon of dropping out has an impact on the economic progress. Besides increasing expenditure on schooling and widening its access, it is also essential to create a supplementary network to provide training to dropouts so that they can avail of economic opportunities. Skill development is an important goal in this regard.^[7]
- The NSDC is a PPP which has the mission of skilling 150 million people by 2022. It acts as a venture capitalist for innovative and quality business models in the domain of skill development. It encourages partnership with industry and has various affiliate centres. A novel policy was that of the Sector Skills Councils. These are councils for 21 different target sectors of the NSDC which have members from the concerned industry. These Councils form National Occupational Standards(NOS) which define skill sets required for these different sectors. These encourage initiatives in skill development in their respective sectors.^[10]
- Required skill set for the sectors being studied in the project to be identified and differentiated. The automobile/automotive parts sector is not a customer-interface industry, it is a factory and workshop-based industry and the main interaction that takes place is between factory workers and mechanics and floor managers and supervisors. Though formal reports were not available, newspaper and magazine articles and anecdotes of people from the industry. According to a Times of India article on auto components industry, besides

technical and engineering skills, cross-cultural management skills are important for supervisors and communication skills are important for both the workers and supervisors^[12]

- The KPMG Report on Skill Gaps in Indian Automotive Service Sector predicts that as the sector grows, a major challenge that will be faced is the lack of training which affects service quality and delivery. There also exists a huge gap in demand and supply of qualified trainers. The skilling of entry level personnel needs to be improved urgently. ^[13]
- The report of Seattle Jobs Initiative, 'The Importance of Soft Skills In Entry-Level Employment and Post-Secondary Success: Perspectives from Employers and Community Colleges'^[20] of Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI), a non profit organization that creates opportunities for people to support themselves and their families through living-wage careers. SJI offers low-income individuals training that leads to college credentials in growing local industry sectors. A hallmark of SJI's program is the integration of soft skills into their training curriculum. The study had conducted a study of 200 employers in the relevant area and found that 75% of them considered soft skills as relevant as technical skills, if not more. It had a detailed analysis of the different core sectors of SJI and also contained a survey of community colleges and training institutions in the area and dealt with the training methods. The report was very helpful in getting an insight into the research methodology that should be adopted for my study. It contained relevant questions which can point towards employers' attitudes and demand of soft skills. Local employers rank professionalism/integrity, reliability, communication, and teamwork as the top soft skills priorities for entry-level employment. Conversely, creativity/innovation and self-direction were viewed as the least critical of soft skills. The soft skills categories that are both high priorities for local employers and most lacking in job applicants are communication, problem solving/adaptability, and reliability. Communication was by far the most common skill lacking in job applicants as reported by 55% of employers surveyed.

- The paper by Prof Verica Babic and Prof Marko Slavkovic from University of Kragujevac titled, 'Soft And Hard Skills Development: A Current Situation In Serbian Companies'[21]. The paper gave a formal definition of soft skills and examined the emphasis placed by employers on hard(technical) and soft skills and the type of soft skills demanded. It uses statistical tools to determine the most important variables for soft skills. The study gave an insight on how to examine data collected from survey and what should the questions to be probed be. According to the analysis in the study, it was determined that there were no statistically significant differences in the average attitude of company recruiters from different sectors towards the following soft skills: enthusiasm, teamwork, flexibility, communication skills and negotiation skills. According to the analysis, it was determined that statistically significant differences between means of soft skills variables for certain sectors exist only for the following variables: time management, coordination and organization, acquiring of new knowledge, creativity, analytical skills, job analysis and leadership.
- The paper by James Heckmen titled, 'Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children' was studied which provided insights into the impact of childhood learning and training. It talked about how skill formation across the life cycle is highly influenced by the early environments a child faces. Early inputs determine the productivity of later inputs. Heckmen's studies deal with non-cognitive skills and their impact on employment outcomes. Adult success variables in terms of employment and income outcomes as well as career progression were studied.

According to the study, there is a gap in the workforce, both in terms of educational qualifications and skills which the employees possess at the time of recruitment. The study was based in the United States and highlights the gap which exists between the expectations of employers and the quality of available workforce.

The report dealt with Government interventions which are taken up to better the situation of students from the lower income strata. These schemes like the 'No Child Left Behind' Act and second chance programs run in the country

concentrate on results which are in terms of cognitive skills i.e. cognitive test score outcomes or the like to measure the success of the intervention. However, non cognitive skills like motivation, perseverance and tenacity are important for success in life which are not focused upon in a majority of public policy measures in the education sector. The paper described a study which was done on the *Perry Pre School Program* which was a 2-year experimental intervention for African-American children that involved morning programs at school and afternoon visits by the teacher. There were special classes and activities held for the students. Compared to a control group comprising students in normal pre-schools, *Perry* students had higher IQ scores as well as test scores. The difference was attributed to the higher motivation levels that the *Perry* students had. Also, in the follow-up studies which were done till age 40, the *Perry* students has higher rates of graduation, higher employment rates, higher salaries, higher rates of home ownership. Thus, success factors were much higher for students who had had activities to hone skills as well as develop personality traits in isolation of home environments. The difference in the two groups was mainly in the level of non cognitive skills possessed.

Schools are important institutions for reducing skill gaps existing in society as well as enabling institutions. However, the main aspect of school effectiveness that is focused on public policy discourse is test scores of students. Government intervention in this sector is essential to close gaps existing in society. However, policy initiatives and Government efforts should also focus on developing non cognitive skills or soft skills. The curriculum should focus on developing these skills as well since these help to differentiate between employees at a later stage and also are an indicator of traditional success variables. The paper had examples of successful case studies of programs that had been implemented in the States. Such models and the study of their structure, scope and reach were studied in order to help with the recommendations dealing with soft skills training to marginalized youth.

- The excerpts of the book, "Beyond College for All- Career Paths for the Forgotten Half" by the sociologist James E. Rosenbaum were studied. . The report gone through mentioned the employability gap which exists in most of the countries

in the world in terms of high school graduates being unable to get quality jobs. This is mainly due to a skills gap which exists at that level. The study undertaken concentrated on the United States. In general, there is an absence of a formal skilling framework after school and college education is not accessible and/or affordable, due to which there are problems of unemployment and underemployment. The study focuses on the need to develop a skilling framework after school so that the employability gap is addressed.

The study helped to formulate an implementation module for the proposal to incorporate soft skills training in school level curriculum or in vocational training institutes where students are admitted right after school. There are successful case studies which are mentioned, that of Japan and Germany, which have formal systems for aiding young people who are looking for employment.

There is also a study on the respective importance of cognitive and non-cognitive skills, showing that certain non-cognitive skills like sociability, leadership, attendance and discipline are linked to higher earnings. The research work follows 7000 students in the USA for 10 years, starting from high school; research shows that soft skills not only have a positive impact on higher earnings but also a bigger impact on higher grades in high school which are an indicator for career attainment. The work of Rosenbaum mainly concentrates on models which have developed in various countries or Government schemes which seek to increase the employability of high school graduates so that they are able to build a career without the need for expensive college education. This study helped to access successful cases which will help to form a correct implementation module of recommendation.

- The report titled "Building Trainers' Skills in Vocational Employability" of the NSDC examined the existing scenario of trainers' skills as a critical player in the vocational employability space and understand functioning of the training institutes across categories to generate learning and recommend a roadmap to develop trainers' capacity. It had interviews of trainers from urban and rural areas in 6 sectors and was carried across 8 states. The study stated that there

was no formal certification and regulation of trainers. There were lack of incentives for trainers to take up the profession. Also, while majority if the trainers possessed technical skills, they were lacking in soft skills and entrepreneurship development skills. 52% trainers believe that certification improves probability of higher salary increases and 42% feel it leads to faster promotions. Trainers with NGO run training institutes felt certification is most beneficial for continuous engagement (49%), enhanced motivation (53%), higher roles & responsibilities (51%) and recognition among trainees and peers (53%). But certification and accreditation mechanism for trainers is lacking. There is no uniform method of trainer assessment and evaluation. There were recommendations listed which included greater involvement of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) in the formulation and implementation of accreditation and certification. There is an urgent need to equip trainers with soft skills and incorporating aspects like counselling training and assistance for placements and developing entrepreneurship skills. There is a demand-supply mismatch, especially in rural areas, which needs to be addressed. Also, restructuring of trainers' courses to make it more relevant and contemporary is needed. The possibility of a database in the form of a Trainers' Information Database (TIS) was looked at (under purview of SSCs).

- The importance of soft skills in the present employment scenario was found from continuous literature review. Most reports that were studied emphasized the growing importance of soft skills, even for entry-level jobs. A survey done on employability gap and opportunities and challenges associated with it, the 'IndiaSkills - People Matters Survey 2011'^[11] had 169 participants from leading organizations in the country across different sectors like retail, IT and ITeS, hospitality, automobile and auto components, etc. and most respondents agreed with the fact that there is a high employability gap at entry level and the existing education system is unable to provide the required technical and functional skills. Companies have to invest heavily in in-house training programmes since the level of candidates applying for jobs is not up to mark. The motive of placements is to select candidates with minimum desirable criteria and training after induction. Immediate productivity of entry level employees is low and

there are gaps in the education system. The seven key findings are:

1. 85% respondents agree that entry-level talent is a very important element for their companies' business competitiveness. The study reveals that entry-level talent creates a way to build an internal talent pipeline, maintains the balance of manpower costs and increases efficiency.
2. 52% of the respondents agreed that there is inadequate number of candidates available when hiring for entry-level positions, while 75% agreed that there is a problem in finding quality Candidates.
3. Over 80% of the companies surveyed agreed that they prefer candidates who have some vocational or skills training when hiring for entry-level positions.
4. 91% respondents agreed that training is a must for entry-level roles.
5. 21% respondents felt that their current training system is not effective and a significant 30% were not sure about the effectiveness of their process for entry-level training.
6. 87% respondents agreed that education, combined with vocational training, provides better candidates with respect to their job readiness, reduces training costs and makes employees hired at the entry-level become productive faster.
7. For 84% respondents, attrition levels are higher than 25%. Further, 52% respondents agreed that entry-level attrition is mainly driven by inadequate skills to cope with job demands and 55% agreed that attrition is also driven by the lack of awareness of growth opportunities in the organization.

4.2 Finding from the fields and impact on the theoretical focus of the project

4.2.1 Field Visit to Gras Academy, Ghaziabad Centre

Outcome of the Field Visit

1. Demand for soft skills is high among students; they are responding well and in greater number to soft skills training modules

2. Soft skills are in great demand by companies; hard skills get one to an interview but soft skills get one through an interview; Placement partners emphasize on the presence of soft skills in their briefing.

Confirms literature review and emphasizes need to develop soft skill training; to be substantiated by industry survey and interviews of people from industry bodies and individual companies

3. Soft skills courses are being run separately as personality development courses and communication skills and are also incorporated in the regular technical and vocational courses like accounts, computer hardware and networking.

Shows that soft skill training is recognized and developing in India. Training methods and the skills taught to be analyzed.

4. Trainers recognize importance of soft skills development and separate trainers for soft skills are inducted by Academy.

5. Insights on possible initiatives in schools and colleges in regular, formal education for soft skill development provided.

(Discussion details in Appendix A)

4.2.2 Field Visit to NYJL NIIT Outreach Centre, Paharganj

Outcome of the Field Visit

1. Demand for soft skills is high among students; they are responding well and in greater number to soft skills training modules but this is limited to customer-interface sector courses like retail and office jobs like accountancy.
2. Soft skills are in great demand by companies; hard skills get one to an interview but soft skills get one through an interview; Student experience in interviews demonstrates the fact that soft skills are paramount.
3. Soft skills training modules are incorporated and made compulsory for certain courses which are classified as 'job-oriented/career' courses- like retail, accountancy. There is another set of courses which focus on technical skills only. However, if the students enrolling for these courses want to apply for jobs right after course completion, training for facing interviews is provided, which is soft skills training like presentable appearance, etiquettes, communication skills.
4. Trainers recognize importance of soft skills development and try to include modules on the same(formally) or tips and lessons on the same(informally); trainers themselves undergo a rigorous training module and are taught about the course they are going to be taken and have to conduct mock training sessions and pass tests before they are certified as NIIT trainers.
5. Insights on possible initiatives in schools and colleges in regular, formal education for soft skill development provided. The need to incorporate soft skills or life skills training at school level was emphasized. The teaching curriculum and teaching methods at schools are insufficient and inefficient and do not equip the students.
6. Garnered insights into the hurdles faced training students, particularly in soft skills training.

There is lack of understanding about importance of soft skills and absence of a

conducive environment to build the same outside of the training centre.

There is reluctance on part of the parents to allow students to go to far-off places for training and recruitment.

The socio-economic background of students also poses a hurdle.

(Discussion details in Appendix A)

4.2.3 Field Visit to Aide et Action iLead Centre, Khajoori Khas

Outcome of the field visit :

1. Trainers and training centres recognize the importance of soft skills like communication skills and personality development and personal grooming.
2. Training centre taking initiative like industrial field visits during the course of the program which lead to enhancement of both technical skills as well as soft skills; exposure to real world environment happens and students pick up skills which are of relevance in future employment scenario.
3. There are hurdles in the process of training. Many of them are unique to the target population. The home environment and background prevents development of certain personality traits or skills or habits which are favoured by employers in present times.
4. After placement as well, there are some hurdles which arise. These mainly exist for female students. There is reluctance on part of the parents to let them take up jobs relatively far away. There is lack of opportunities in areas to which the students belong to. Thus, a problem is posed by the attitudinal rigidities. Also, many candidates leave the job within a few months due to reasons like marriage or parental opposition, etc.
5. The course structure for various sectors was studied. Besides training for sector-specific 'hard' or technical skills, there were skills which were classified as 'All Trade Skills' which were imparted to students of all courses. These included computer skills and communication skills. Spoken English was emphasized upon. Personality

development was stressed upon. There were many activities which were conducted to develop skills like communication, critical thinking and creativity, Confidence building and leadership development were also included in the modules. A congenial atmosphere was sought to be created to put students at ease and to make it easier for them to interact with trainers and mentors to ensure better and more efficient learning.

6. Placement assistance was provided to all students. Prior to placement process, mock interviews and sessions on personal grooming and formal dressing were held. There were orientations to enable students to adapt to an office environment. This is an example of soft skills directly contributing to employment outcomes and recognition of the importance of the same.

7. Information about the "All Trade" course- students of all courses are trained in spoken English and given classes on personality development like personal grooming and formal dressing and office etiquettes.

8. Impact and effectiveness of activities of training centre on the students' attitudes and employment outcomes of the same. Students' response to the same is also positive and they recognize the importance of the activities conducted and the soft skills gained.

9. A students' perspective on soft skills training as well as hurdles existing in the way of efficient education, skill development as well as placements was gained.

10. Success stories were discussed- Alumni who had been promoted from assistants to manager level and salespeople to outlet in-charges. Also, some alumni came back as trainers after working for some time and gaining experience so that more effective training is provided.

11. Recruitment of trainers is also a detailed process based on criteria like expertise and experience in the field, educational qualification and soft skills like communication skills and leadership qualities.

4.2.3 Field Visit to Deepalaya School and Vocational Training Centre, Okhla

Outcome of the visit :

1. The organization runs a school in the Sanjay Colony area of Okhla which was visited as well as in different regions of Delhi. The expansion plans seek to reach Uttarakhand and Haryana. With respect to schools, there are different kinds of assistance provided- the organization runs a school in the locality for the primary level. For the secondary and higher secondary level, assistance is provided in the form of Remedial Education Centre (REC). Students are provided help with academics and are encouraged to continue with the formal schooling process. There is also another platform which is the Non Formal Education (NFE). Students who have dropped out of school are provided assistance in this manner. There are classes held for students and they are equipped with real world skills at the same time through a plethora of activities. Students are also encouraged to join the formal schooling system by providing them with an opportunity to catch up with the others through regular classes.

2. The vocational training that is provided by the centre was explained. The programme is funded by PSUs or corporate sponsors and independent organizations. It is open to anyone above the age of 13. However, the batches were tailored according to the age group of the students. The older batch is provided with placement assistance, as well. The placements were as toll collectors, associates in call centres. 17 out of 25 students who wanted to sit for placements were placed through the programme in the last batch.

3. The course module of the programme was discussed. The main skills focused on were computer skills, communication skills in terms of spoken English and fluency in the same and life skills training. These skills are soft skills which are in demand in the job market in present times. Each of the three courses have a different trainer and a specific number of hours which need to be completed in order to be eligible for certification and placement assistance, if needed.

The module on life skills included personality development through activities in confidence building and leadership skills. Another area stressed upon was that of personal grooming and etiquette. The importance of formal dressing, formal behaviour and formal use of language as well as body language and conduct in different situations

was stressed upon. Time management was a skill which was sought to be taught as well. The curriculum of the life skills course was flexible and need based. The trainer modified the course structure according to the needs of the students and their goals after the programme.

4. Information about the school level life skills programme was given. Life skills were sought to be developed in the students from early on through a host of activities at school level. There were special classes during regular school hours as well as summer camps to provide students with a platform to showcase their talent as well as develop their skills. Various activities at school level as well as value education classes and special classes held in schools help students to develop their personality.

4.3 Findings from survey

The survey entailed sifting through and sorting data of job profiles advertised for in 3 job profile sites- Shine.com, Naukri.com and Taazajobs.com. The jobs picked up were those that did not require prior experience. All were entry-level positions. The results showed that soft skills like communication skills and computer skills are gaining importance. English is recognized as the language of industry and is much in demand. Thus, it is rightly the language of aspiration of India's youth.

Of the 50 job profiles analyzed :

1. 82% jobs demanded a 12th pass certificate (educational qualifications)
2. 82% jobs demanded fluency in English (soft skill)
3. 50% jobs demanded communication skills in regional languages also, in addition to English (soft skill)
4. 80% jobs demanded proficiency in computer skills. Out of them, 25 jobs could be classified as demanding these as a technical skill. For the rest, this was a soft skill.

The survey conducted among companies had the following results (the questionnaire in detail can be found in Appendix B) :

1. Most respondents value soft skills as much as technical skills while hiring a employee. (82%).

The responses to the question : "How important are soft skills in securing entry level employment in your company?"

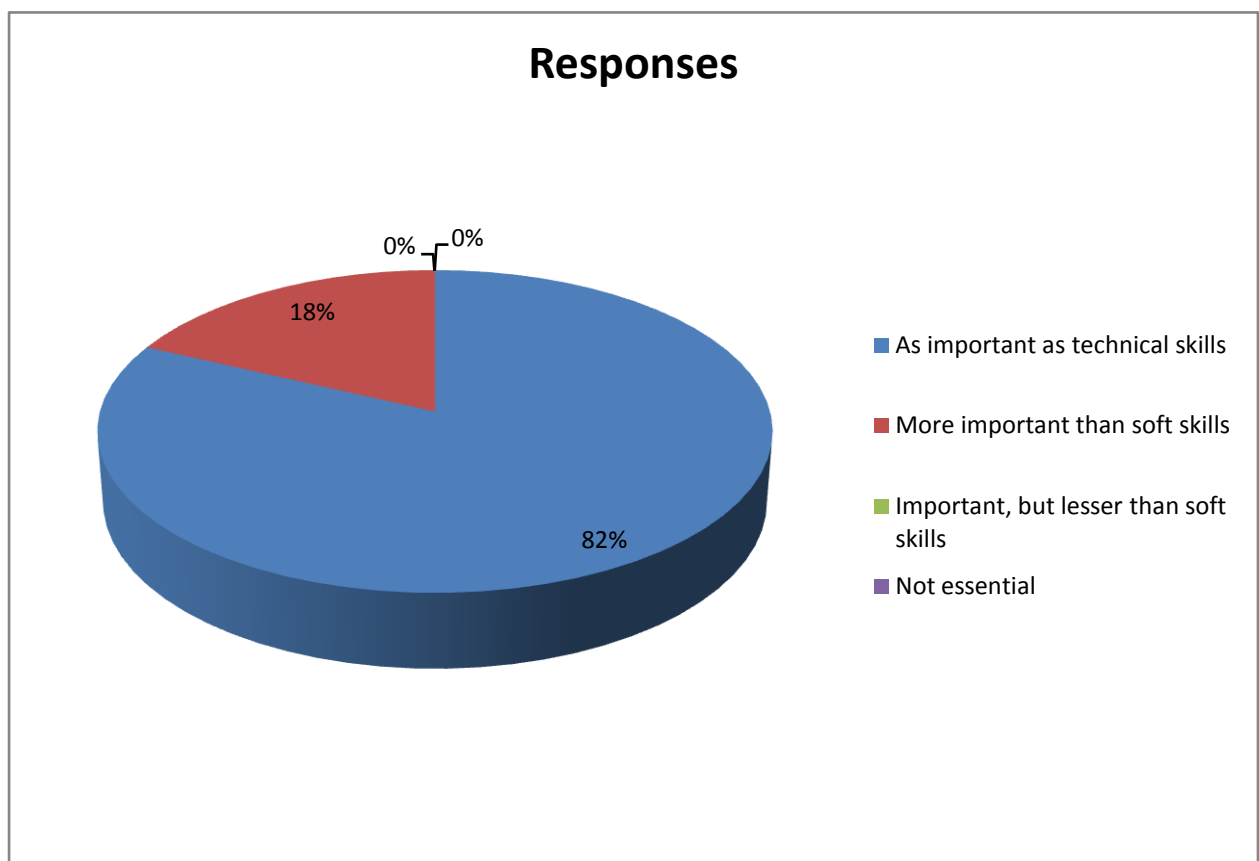


Figure 6- Importance of soft skills (survey question)

2. Skills like communication skills, punctuality and professionalism and integrity were rated much higher than educational qualifications and even computer skills.

Office etiquette, personal grooming were regarded as important skills by the HR heads from retail sector.

Problem solving and creative thinking were regarded as a more important skill for higher level employees and not entry level positions.

3. The method of assessment of soft skills was sought to be known. Multiple methods are used as evidenced by multiple responses.

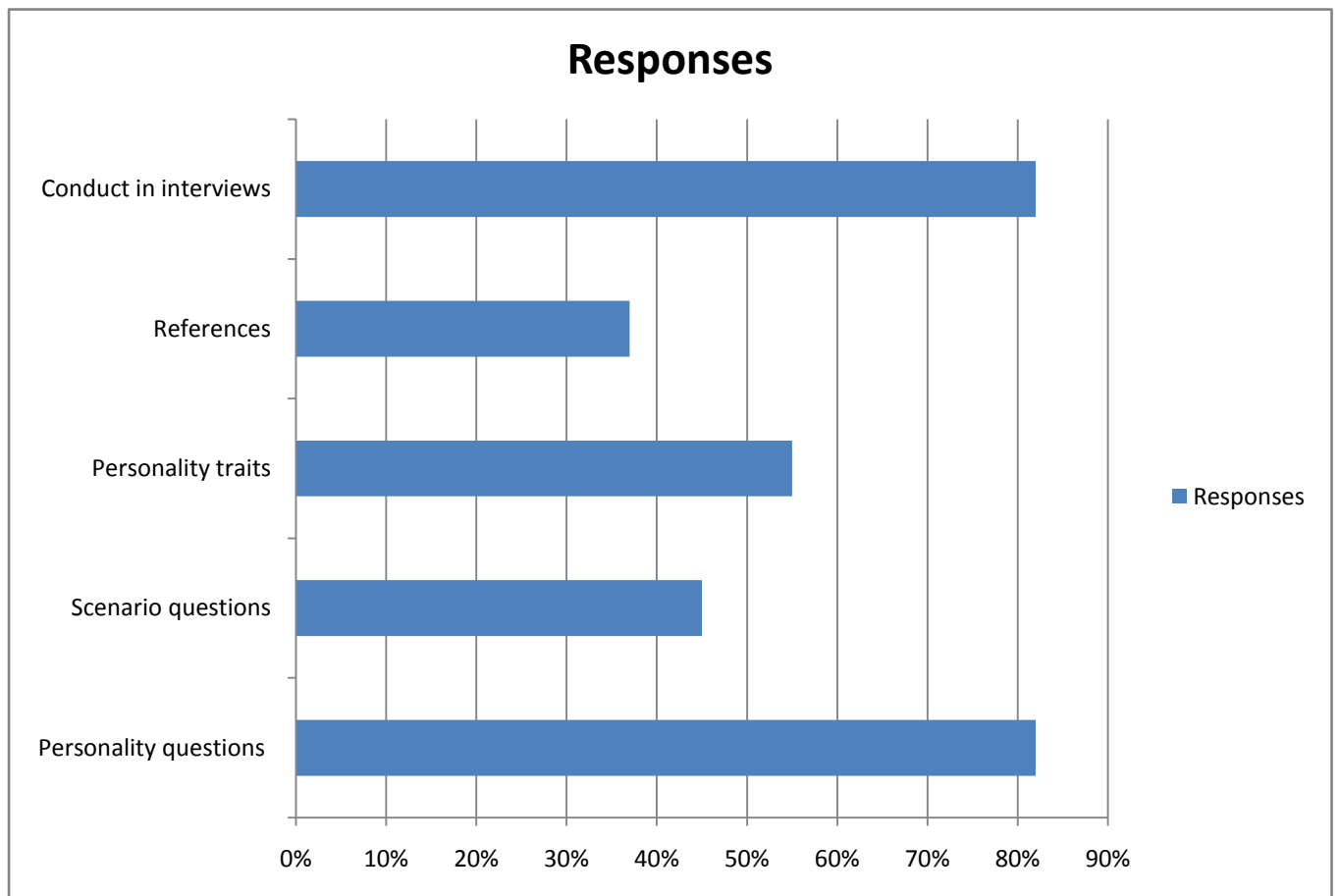


Figure 7- Methods of assessment of soft skills (survey questions)

4. Most employees find soft skills lacking in the applicants. The responses to the question asking the extent to which employers find soft skills lacking in applicants

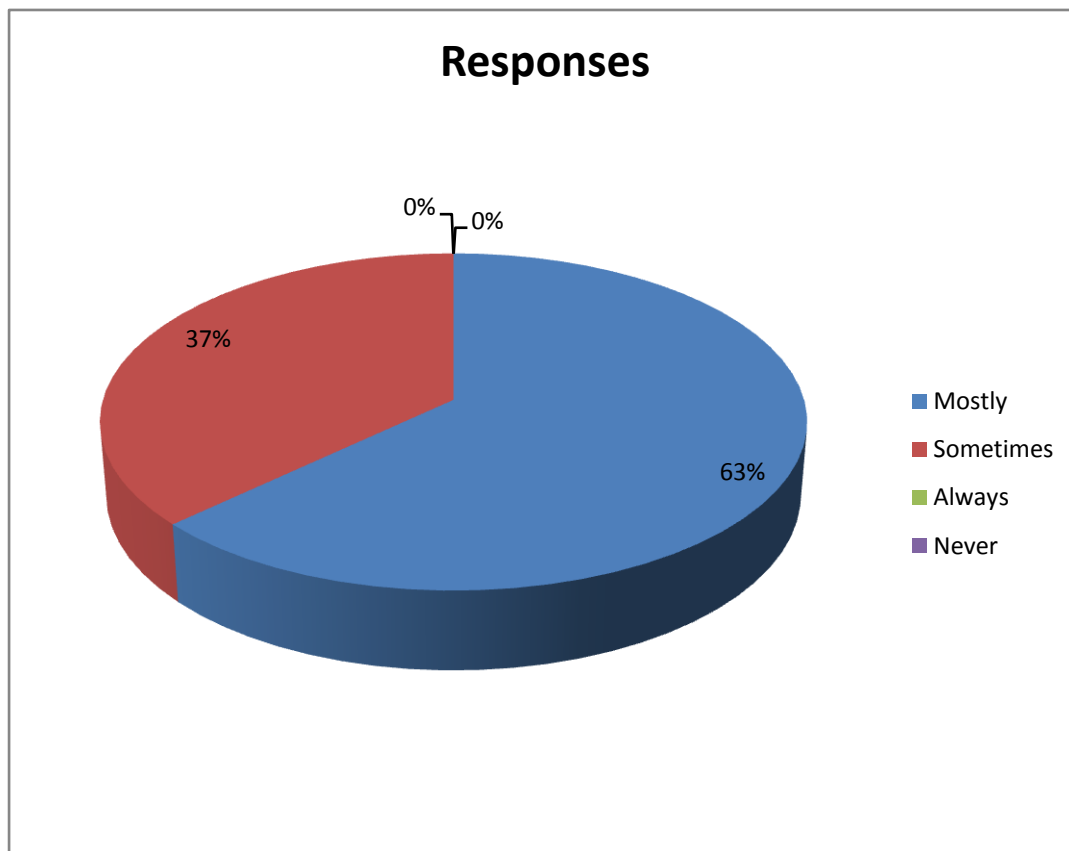


Figure 8-Soft skills lacking (survey question)

5. Skills like communication skills, personal grooming and reliability and professionalism and integrity are found to be lacking the most in employees. Most soft skills are found lacking in employees but these were found to be lacking the most and impacting the productivity of employees.

6. Employers are willing to take responsibility for the training employees. However, there are mixed views on which is the way in which soft skills of employees need to be developed. The responses to the question on who is responsible for developing soft skills of employees (with multiple responses) :

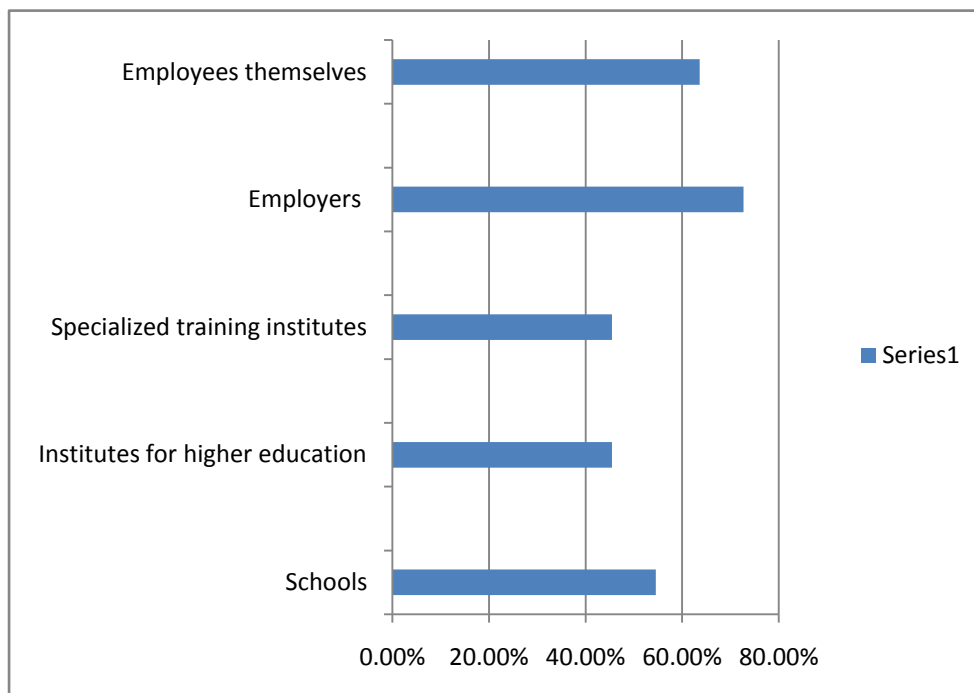


Figure 9- Methods of training (survey question)

7. All companies offered soft skills training to their employees. There were various models and methods which were mentioned by the respondents like classroom training sessions, e-learning sessions and video lectures, activities like theatre and other fun activities and induction training.

8. Majority of the respondents experienced an improved performance of their employees after training programmes. The responses to evaluation of performance by employers was :

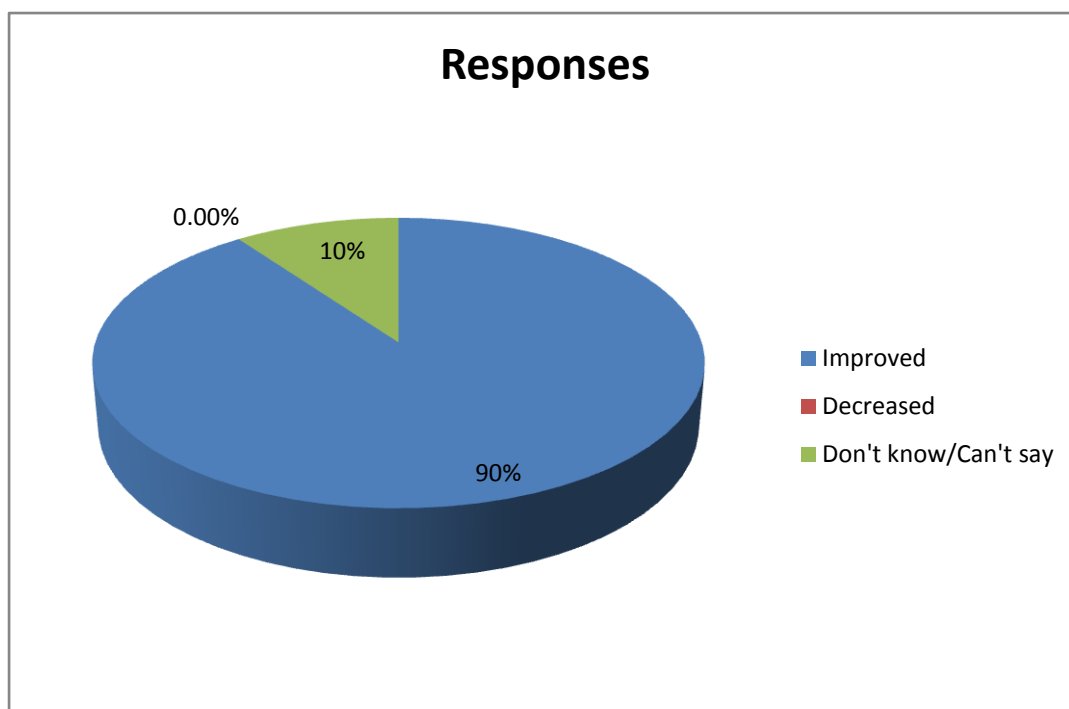


Figure10 - Performance of employees (survey question)

4.4 Gap analysis

The Government has recognized skill development as an important policy objective. The Eleventh Plan led to the creation of a National Skill Development Mission. As a result, a “Coordinated Action on Skill Development” with three-tier institutional structure consisting of (i) PM’s National Council (ii) National Skill Development Coordination Board (NSDCB), (iii) National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was created in early 2008. The first institution spells out policy advice and direction in the form of “Core Principles” and has created a vision to create 500 million skilled people by 2022 through skill systems, which are inclusive. The second institution coordinates the skill development efforts of various Central Ministries/Departments and states. The third institution prepares comprehensive action plans and activities which promote PPP models of financing skill development.^[4]

Government has also been taking initiatives to improve the education landscape of the country. The literacy rate of the country has seen a constant upward trend. Many unique initiatives like SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), Shiksha Karmis, Mid-Day Meal Scheme have been started by the Government to ensure that children stay in school and the rate of dropouts decreases. The serious problem of a high dropout rate in India which has been recognized by the Government as well, as seen by one of the 27 targets of the Eleventh Five Year Plan on Education- Reduction in the dropout rates of children at the elementary level from 52.2 per cent in 2003–04 to 20 per cent by 2011–12 (Mukherjee and Sikdar, 2011). The dropout reducing schemes have increased from 7 in 2007-08 with an allocation of 61794.2 million (RE) rupees to 8 in 2011-12 with an allocation of 103,047.3 million rupees (RE).^[8]

Government run and/or supported ITIs have seen the PPP model introduced for their administration from 2007. Funding to them for developing infrastructure has increased. The number of private ITIs has increased along with the scope of the trades. Initiatives like NSDC have been supporting quality and scale able business models in the field of skill development through provision of funding in the form of grants or equity to the

same. There is careful evaluation of business proposals and monitoring of performance afterwards as well.

Innovative partnerships between different local and state governments and NGOs or the private sector have been taken as mentioned earlier in current Government and NGO efforts.

However, major gaps exist in three respects-

1. Soft skills training has not been identified and incorporated into the formal skill development landscape. There is no provision of soft skills training in ITIs or other training institutes separately. Most of the initiatives that have been taken are by private training centres or NGOs. It has not been recognized as a major part of skill development. The focus has been on honing technical or vocational skills which ensure immediate employability but long-term performance which is determined by soft skills is ignored. Avenues for soft skill development are furthermore limited for the target sector, the marginalized youth comprising school dropouts. Training for entry level jobs is very limited.

2. At the school level, there is negligible focus on developing life skills for students. It can be very beneficial if concentrated on in Government schools which cater to the lower income sections of society and can help the students from this background to blend into the mainstream, ensuring better outcomes of higher education and employment. However, these do not form a part of the formal curriculum and where they do, they are hampered by limited teacher efforts and excess focus on conventional syllabus and overall unwillingness of students, parents and teachers.

3. There exists a huge gap in the need and the supply of trainers for soft skills. There are very few quality or recognized institutes for training of teachers in this regard. There is no formal or uniform framework for assessing them that exists at a pan-India level. Initiatives have been taken by NGOs and private enterprises but Government effort in this respect is absent.

5. Recommendations, Scope and Strategy for Implementation

Based on the study of literature done so far and the field visits conducted, certain policy proposals have been formulated. There are certain successful models which have been implemented at the local or state level. They have been looked at and the possibility of expanding their scope and coverage analyzed.

- 1) Recommendation: The National Skill Development Corporation supports initiatives for skill development through funding and partner/affiliate centres and organizations. Soft skill training can be increased and improved by making provision of sector specific soft skills compulsory for proposal acceptance.

Scope: The proposal evaluation process involves criteria which need to be adhered to or met before the proposals are passed. To encourage soft skills training in these institutions, incorporation of sector specific skills can be made a part of the evaluation criteria. This will ensure that these institutes, which are already reaching out to the marginalized sections of society and giving training in various job-oriented sectors as well as providing placement assistance for entry-level jobs, incorporate soft skills training in a structured manner. This will benefit the students of these institutes in terms of bagging job offers and will benefit institutes as they will see better placement records. It will benefit companies who recruit from these centres since they will get adequately skilled workers who subscribe to better work ethic. Thus, the number of placement partners will also increase as more and more companies become willing to engage with these centres and the overall placement procedure improves.

The certification process can be standardised in this regard. Certification can be made uniform and monitored by the policies and regulations of Sector Skills

Councils being formed.

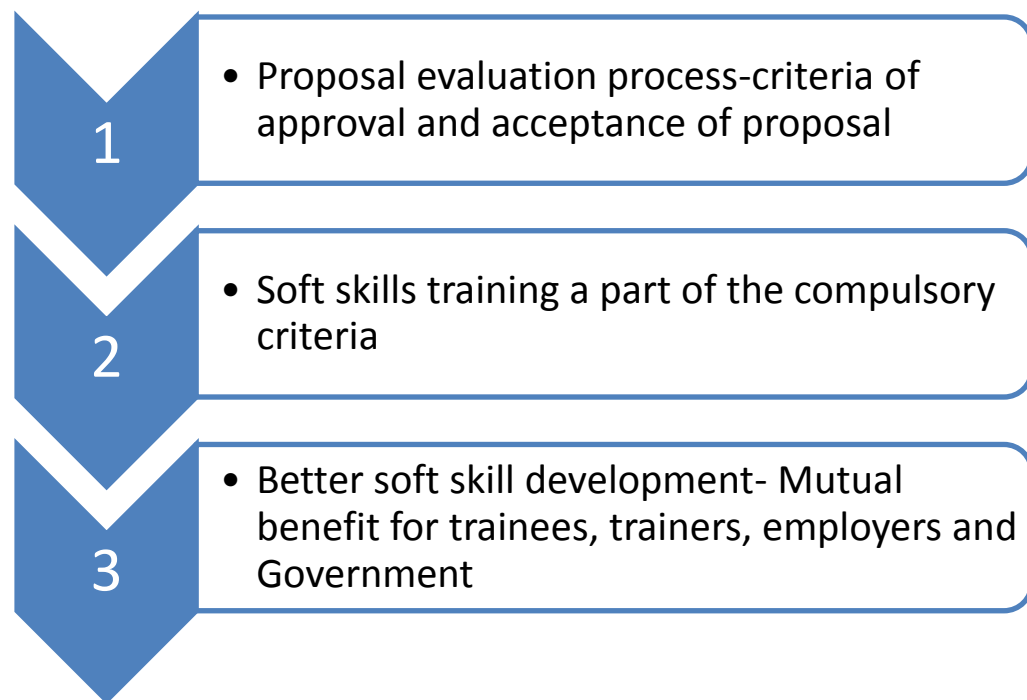


Figure 11- Recommendation 1

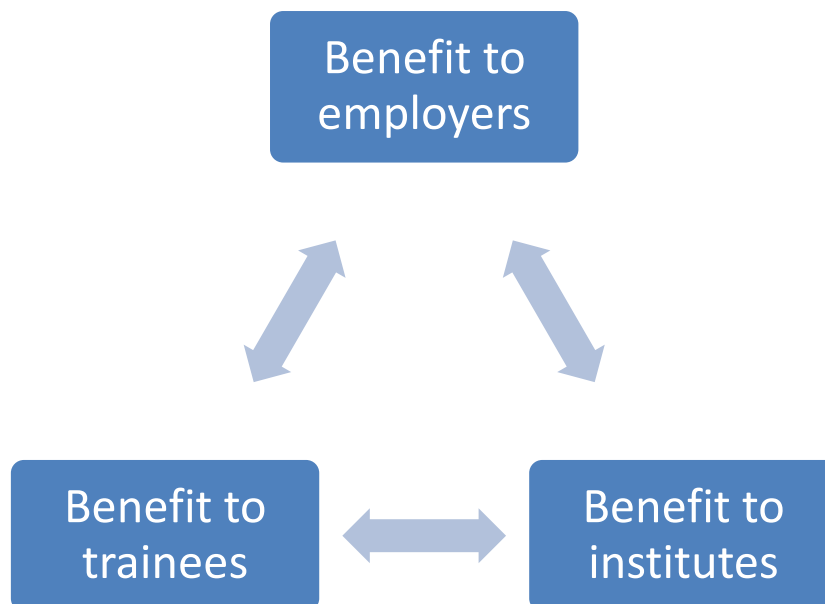


Figure12- Mutual Benefit from incorporation in training

- 2) Recommendation: Increasing the reach of soft skills training and taking it to the target sector by incorporating soft skills training in the curriculum of schools. Partnerships can be built between the Sector Skills Councils and the education boards like NCERT and CISCE along with state boards. Alternatively, the National Vocational Educational Qualification Framework (NVEQF) which is set to be implemented at school level should incorporate life skills training in all courses offered and not just limited to some vocational courses. The skills imparted can include two components- life skills training and value education which is imparted in school from primary level onwards through group activities, school level activities and clubs as well as classroom lessons and interactive sessions. The other component will be the vocational course specific training which is imparted along with the vocational training at school level. This soft skills training will help to make the students more employment ready.

Scope: Many initiatives have already been taken in this regard; there are partnerships between government efforts and NGOs and other private enterprises. However, the approach needs to be streamlined and given a formal framework. Soft skills training can be incorporated into the school-level curriculum, as part of extracurricular activities, value education classes.

Incorporation in the same will contribute to not only a better workforce, but a better citizenry. The students' performance at school level will also improve at school level, with more participation in school activities, as has been documented. Thus, school level learning outcomes will improve. At the same time, prospects for students wanting to get absorbed into the workforce right after school will get improved as they will be equipped with more relevant real world skills. Students who want to continue with higher education will also have better skill sets and thus, the overall quality of workforce, at all levels. Taking such a measure ensures near universal access to soft skills training. As such a scheme will be implemented in Government and Government-aided schools, training will reach the marginalized sections of society.

Case Study-

Successful model : The Thalir Thiran Thittam (TTT) Project of Aparajitha Foundation in Tamil Nadu.

Thalir Thiran Thittam (Skills Program for Sapling), a Life Skills Education program, was piloted, to 7th standard students, in 5 Higher Secondary Schools in Madurai, Sivagangai and Virudhunagar district during since 2008 August. At the review of the project, at the end of academic year 2008-09, it was scaled up to 12th standard and to 2141 Government High Schools and 2098 Government Higher Secondary Schools in Tamil Nadu. According to a Government Order issued in November 2009, by the Department of Education, TTT is being rolled-out to all students from class VII to class XII in all Government High schools and Higher Secondary Schools in Tamil Nadu. During the year under consideration, 'TTT' was implemented in some specially selected schools under private management as well as Government aid schools.

The objective behind the program is to take the soft skills learning- interpersonal skills, communication skills, decision-making skills, self-management skills- to the marginalized communities in rural and urban areas who have no access to such skills which pose a major hurdle when they go outside to pursue higher education and which affects their performance in these institutes and more importantly, in placements.

The program involves teacher training as well which is done to ensure that the teachers who are going to be taking up life skills training in schools could handle the TTT course module well. This ensured a better outcome of lessons in the classroom as opposed to traditional value education classes followed in Government as well as other schools otherwise. The TTT lessons have a practical relevance as well. The model is one which has spread across the state and is being spread to Gujarat and from secondary and higher secondary levels to primary level. This model offers a success story for implementation of life skills training at school level in India.

Gujarat Government has come forward and proposed to introduce 6000 such model

schools.

Regular feedback is taken from teachers, administrators, students and media. This helps in keeping the curriculum dynamic. As a recent initiative, video lectures are being made in regional languages as well as English and distributed to schools which are not directly under the program's ambit. Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, has been conducting research on the program and offers annual suggestions on the implementation strategy, which helps to increase the efficiency and also helps the methods to be in a process of constant change to adapt to best available practices.

As part of the studies commissioned by the organization and independently as well, life skills training has been effective in promoting family relations of students, respect towards authority in terms of teachers and parents, solving problems of inferiority complex and behavioral problems, boosting self-confidence, promoting entrepreneurship and work culture and ultimately creating responsible citizens.

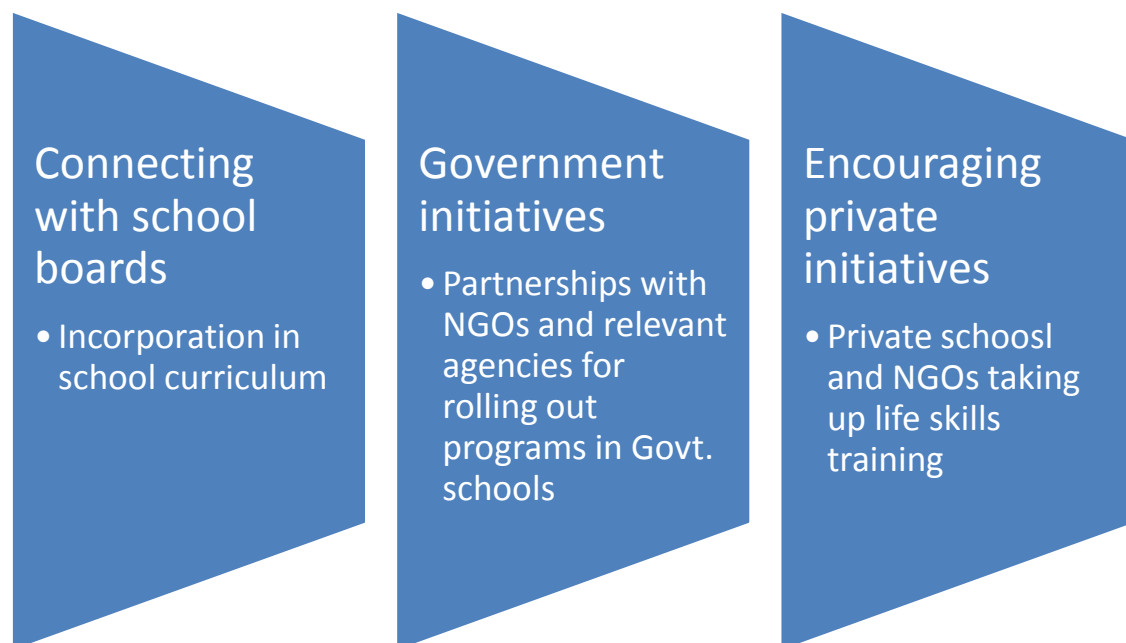


Figure 13- Recommendation 2

3) Recommendation - Sector specific soft skills should be incorporated in the National Occupational Standards(NOS) being formed by the Sector Skill Councils of the 21 target sector. The process of certification of students and standardisation of the curriculum should be defined.

SSCs are partnership organizations which bring together industry, labour, academia and Government and help to identify skill gaps in the country- both at micro and macro level, with the aim to bridge the existing skill gaps. They are involved in designing curricula, developing standards of occupation and undertaking research and training and to aid the setting up of sector specific institutes of excellence for conducting research and training. The ultimate aim is to boost the quality of workforce.

Incorporation of soft skills in NOS and designing of curriculum will help in appropriate skill specific training in centres for skill training as well as in educational institutions which offer vocational training or training for a particular professional course.

Components which should be looked at are pre-placement training and assistance and post-placement monitoring and support.

Scope - The National Occupational Standards(NOS) being formed by the Sector Skill Councils of the 21 target sector should be given weight age and publicity and their scope widened to form a guiding framework for course structures and training modules of ITIs and ITCs and other training institutes through a standardisation of the certification process which is recognized and centred around a carefully designed curriculum.

Curriculum should include industrial and field visits and interaction with industry, pre-placement guidance in the form of classes for training in office etiquette and dressing, communication skills and other relevant soft skills depending on the sector.

A uniform curriculum and training and certification process will help to improve the quality of workforce and also increase the employability as there will be a reliable

indicator present for recruitments. Also, with the help of post placement support and monitoring, the cost to company in training of employees and losses due to no n-retention of employees will reduce.



Figure 14- Recommendation 3

4) Recommendation - Trainer training centres and curriculum need to be looked at in the present scenario. There should be a standardised evaluation and certification procedure introduced for people to qualify as trainers.

Best practices should be incorporated at a pan-India or organization level for more effective training.

A database of trainers can be sought to be created and Sector Skill Councils membership or guidelines set by the same can be set. Details are in the flowchart below.

Scope - Currently, there is a gap in the demand and supply of trainers in India, especially for soft skills training. Recognized training solutions exist in the private sector only for management level employees mainly. There needs to be quality training solutions for entry level roles for which we need qualified and certified trainers. If a regulated training and certification framework is present for the trainers, then quality and adequate training will be ensured. This will ensure in better dissemination of skills and better results in terms of skilling and placement. It will also induce more people to join the profession since there will Government recognition involved. The trust deficit and the quality issue will be looked after as well as the demand-supply gap can be remedied.

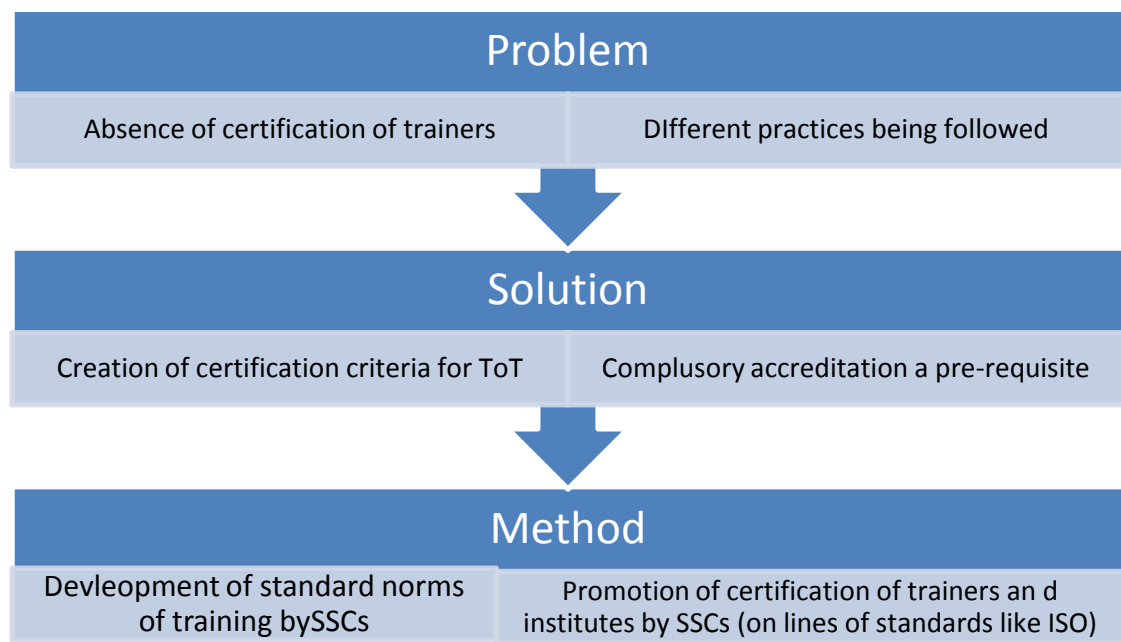


Figure 15- Recommendation 4

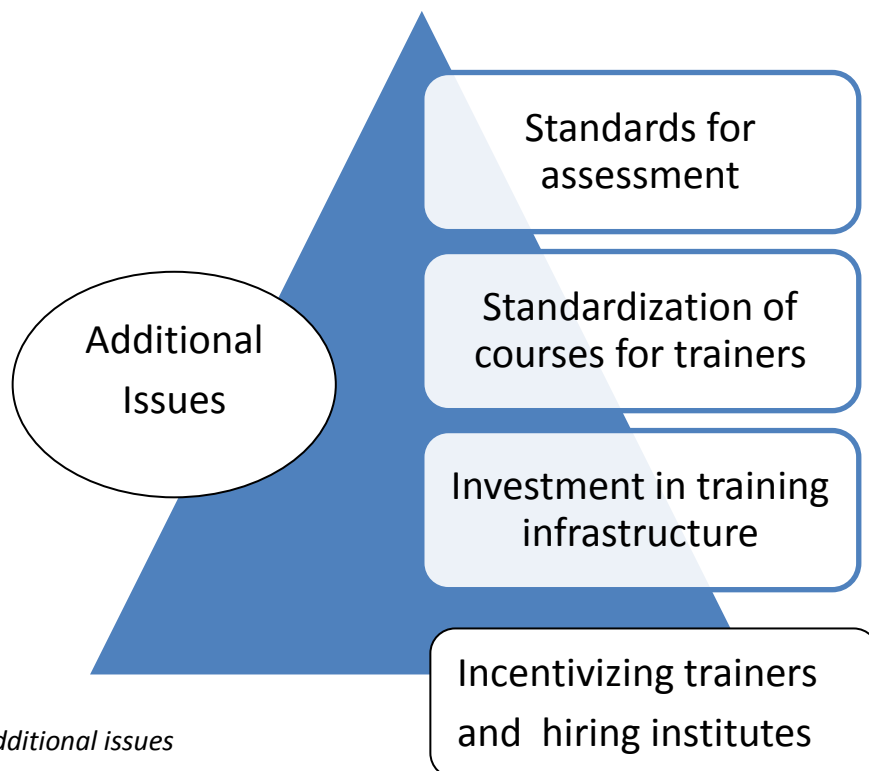


Figure 16- Additional issues

6. Conclusion

The project looks at how soft skills have become an important part of the repertoire of skills that an employee should possess in order to become successful in the labour market. This situation is not just limited to management level positions or positions of authority but has permeated to the entry level positions as well. Different sectors have different requirements but a basic set of soft skills is required by all, not just the conventional sectors which function on a customer interface.

There are gaps which exist in this regard. Soft Skills training is at a very nascent stage in India, especially for the target population being looked at. Success stories in the form of models and institutes exist but they are mostly scattered. There is no uniform strategy on the same. However, as skilling is coming to the fore as a policy objective to be pursued, the time is ripe to drive some focus towards incorporating life skills training and sector specific soft skills training in the entire skilling process.

There are a certain set of recommendations which have been listed in the report. Future work is required in researching the exact and most effective implementation strategy for the same. Another area that needs to be looked at is the different set of skills required by different sectors, in which Sector Skills Councils can play an important role.

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Appendix A

Meetings and Interviews with Mentor

Mentor- Shri Atul Bhatnagar

Date: May 27, 2013

Time: 4:30 PM

Duration of Discussion: 1 hour

Discussion (in Detail)

- The first point of discussion was the background and the vision of the National Skills Development Corporation- it's target sectors and its partners
- Introduction to co-mentor, Ms Bhavna Chopra, Principal, Investment and Incentivizing, NSDC, who has been a part of NSDC since a long time and is closely involved with skill development and training
- Explanation of the role of NSDC in detail with special reference to the way projects are funded. NSDC is unique in the sense that it is a PPP and acts as a venture capitalist. A phased and detailed evaluation process is followed to judge the viability of a project across six sets of criteria like employer view of demand for specific skills, ability to leverage partnerships, etc. It works towards developing appropriate business models to enhance, support and co-ordinate private sector initiatives.
- Discussion of the policy on Sector Skills Council (SSCs) for the various target sectors of NSDC- explanation of their scope and ambit. Discussion about the National Occupational Standards (NOS) to be framed for each of the 21 sectors
- Discussion about soft skills and their growing importance, not only for the higher levels of management but also at the entry level of various sectors. Soft skills help to differentiate between different employees with similar technical skills and play an important role in employment and income outcomes.

- International examples were cited. There was the example of China which was discussed and how its social engineering initiatives are geared towards fostering a greater civic sense and improving social skills and soft skills of people.
- The unorganized sector was discussed along with its existing problems, especially with respect to inculcating and measuring soft skills
- A major roadblock would be finding a method to impart soft skills training and measuring them, especially in the case of marginalized youth since their social background makes it difficult for them to fully grasp the importance of soft skills which might appear superficial to them

Action Items before Next Discussion

- Plan and propose a structure for the project; propose a focus and discussion of major areas relevant to the study.
- Selection of the target sectors to be studied- from manufacturing as well as services. These sectors are to be studied in detail; sector skill councils and NOS to be examined
- Go through the list of the partners of NSDC and the centres and study the various sectors for which they provide training, their methodology
- Study skill training programs of other countries- case studies from China, existing establishment in the UK. UK has a ministry for skill training and development as well as a National Career Services instituted
- Start working on a questionnaire and preparation for a sample survey to be conducted to judge employer's attitudes and also the existing training modules and structure, gaps which exist and the importance given to soft skills training, on the basis of which further research would be done and policy suggestions made

References (People to meet, research report or papers to read)

- To read up about NSDC centres and the various sectors they are working on so as to get a clearer picture of the skill development landscape in India and also to identify the sectors to be studied
- Any reports which feature international comparative study and studies about skills development scenario of different countries so as to get an idea about training methods and ideas to improve the current methods and curriculum
- Reports or studies on importance of soft skills and training methods.

Date: June 5, 2013

Time: 4:30 PM

Duration of Discussion: 1 hour

Discussion (in Detail)

- Discussed a new aspect for the project- the importance of language and fluency in entry-level jobs; pertinent questions related to whether English language skills are important in getting better jobs and/or better positions and pay-scales. Possibility of running a survey to test the hypothesis and also examining the importance of other regional languages
- Advice on a new aspect- going through various job sites and examining requirements advertised for entry-level jobs. Making an international comparison of the same. Going through skill sets demanded by employers in the present and which ones are the most relevant.
- Discussed the centres that should be a part of field visits. Some centers in Delhi and some outside Delhi were chosen. The affiliate centers which focus on training of school dropouts were chosen. Field visit to the centers would help to get a better idea of the ground realities and help in the accurate designing of the questionnaire planned.

- Discussed industries that need to be contacted for conducting survey. The Sector Skills Councils and industry bodies to be contacted for the survey were discussed and approved. Contacts of relevant companies and people to be contacted for the survey were given.
- A new idea related to policy recommendations for skill development was discussed. The idea arose from the study of a pilot project undertaken by the Government of Tamil Nadu in Government schools of Madurai to incorporate life skills classes in the school curriculum. Possibility of division of skills between general personal traits which can be incorporated in school curriculum and sector-specific skills which can be a part of the training curriculum

Action Items before Next Discussion

- To finalize the questions for the questionnaire for conducting a survey in 2 industries- automobile/automotive and organized retail. This survey will help to analyze the importance of soft skills in industry by analyzing the emphasis placed by employers on soft skills.
- To go through various job sites and analyze the skill requirements of various sectors; test what kind of skills are looked for in prospective candidates. It will act as a preliminary step in analyzing the importance of soft skills in the employment scenario in the present.
- Work on the questionnaire for prospective employees, i.e. students in training institutes to gauge expectations from possessed skills and evaluation of soft skills; Will also help to give a perspective on the emphasis placed by future employees on soft skills and hurdles which exist in development of the soft skills
- To find out more about the pilot testing carried out in Tamil Nadu and whether it was successful and implemented further; if yes, analyzing the policy and how it can be extended and made part of the formal Government policy. Analyzing feasibility of such measures.
- To conduct field visits to the centres that have been recommended by mentor and co-mentor
- To establish contact with industry bodies which will help in conducting the survey

- To look into data relating to importance of language in employment and how it can be a determinant in income and employment outcomes

References (People to meet, research report or papers to read)

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(<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/03/world/asia/filling-indias-huge-need-for-vocational-training.html?pagewanted=all>)
- Visit the Ghaziabad Centre of Gras Academy
- Contact and visit centre of training institution, 'B-Able'
- Contact HR department of SIAM for reaching the industries in automobile/automotive sector for survey related to assessing employer's evaluation of soft skills and their demand
- Contact HR department of RASCI (Retailer's Association's Skill Council of India) to reach the private players in organized retail sector for survey related to assessing employer's evaluation of soft skills and their demand
- Go through and sift data from job sites like Naukri.com, Shine.com to analyze types of skills demanded at entry level

Contact details of persons met in field visit to Gras Academy, Ghaziabad centre-

	Person 1	Person 2
Full Name	Shri Sunil Kumar Rai	Shri Neeraj Yadav
Designation	In-charge, Ghaziabad centre	Trainer of GCAP Course
Contact No.	0120-2840191	0120-2840191

Time Duration	1 hour (1:30 – 2:30 PM)	30 Mins (2:30- 3:00 PM)
Email Address	skrai@grasacademy.in	nyadav@grasacademy.in

Contact details of persons met in field visit to NYJL NIIT Outreach Centre, Paharanj

	Person 1	Person 2
Full Name	Ms Shreya Singh	Ms Rekha
Designation	In-charge, Paharganj centre	Trainer of IT Course
Contact No.	0120-2840191	0120-2840191
Time Duration	1.5 hours (1:30 – 3:00 PM)	30 Mins (3:00- 3:30 PM)
Email Address	Shreya.singh@niit.com	rekha@niit.com
Notes	She is the head of the Paharganj Outreach Center and has experience in social work and teaching, having worked with OXFAM in the past; details in discussion	She takes the CCIP Course at the Paharganj NIIT Center and has been working there since the last 2 years

Discussion Details of field visits :

1. Field Visit to Gras Academy, Ghaziabad

S.No	Shri Sunil Kumar Rai
1.	Talked about the various courses being provided by Gras Academy and their course structure and training modules. Gave an overview of the structure of the centre and courses, the number and strength of batches, demanded courses by students, trainer background and placement assistance provided to students by

	Gras Academy
2.	On being asked about importance of soft skills, he provided information about the soft skills-related courses being run in the center and the extent of incorporation of training in the training modules of other technical and vocational courses. He provided details of the personality development course
3.	Provided details of placement process. Gras encourages students to find jobs on their own. If they are unable to do so, it assists them through placement partners. In all interviews and briefing from placement partners, soft skills like communication skills, etiquettes, body language, etc matter a lot
4.	There is an increase in the demand side as well with more and more students signing up for courses and training modules for soft skills and courses that have soft skills training incorporated into them. They are realizing the value of these skills and the value addition that they bring

S.No	Shri Neeraj Yadav
1.	Since he was a trainer in the Gras Certified Accounting Professional Course (GCPA- accounting professional course), he provided insights into the training modules of the course. It involved compulsory soft skills learning through modules on communication skills followed by modules on personality development for better performance in interviews and subsequently, jobs. Great emphasis was placed on things like body language, general etiquettes, mailing etiquettes, fluency in spoken and written communication.
2.	Provided insights into hurdles faced in the successful training in soft skills. The background to which most of the students belonged posed a hurdle. Most of them belonged to Government State Board schools where Hindi was the medium of instruction and English, the language of industry and global aspiration was poor, short timeframe of soft skills courses which can't make a lasting impression on students and sometime, unwillingness of students to learn or spend time or money on these courses since they don't seem to have tangible benefits as do technical skills

3.	Talked about the great need to develop soft skills because of their demand by prospective employers and how he tried to motivate students in class by discussing their potential career progress path and how these skills would play a major role in determining it.
4.	Gave insights on how Government could step in to fill the huge void that exists in soft skill development; life skills classes could begin at Government schools as well as development of English communication skills. This would increase employability of students and educe need for external training institutes to step in .

2. Field Visit to NYJL NIIT Outreach Centre :

S.No	Ms. Shreya Singh
1.	Talked about the various courses being provided by NYJL Center and their course structure and training modules. Gave an overview of the structure of the centre and courses, the number and strength of batches, demanded courses by students, trainer background and placement assistance provided to students, the courses for which placement assistance is provided to students.
2.	On being asked about importance of soft skills, she provided information about how soft skills training is incorporated in the courses being run in the center. The training on the same is a part of the courses classified as "job-oriented/career" courses only, not the technical courses like CCIP (IT related course)
3.	Provided information about placement process. Placement assistance is provided for courses which are classified as career courses. Even for the other courses however, students can apply for jobs on their own. In that case, if students require assistance for interviews or soft skills training, it is provided.
4.	There is an increase in the demand for job-oriented courses. There are many school dropouts or school graduates who do not want to continue further

	education but want to take up jobs to support their families or supplement family incomes. These students want to undergo training for soft skills since getting through job interviews demands the same.
5.	<p>She expanded on the hurdles faced while training, especially training in soft skills. One of them is lack of awareness and understanding among many due to the concept of soft skills being an entirely new one.</p> <p>The second is the absence of a conducive environment at home for such attitudes or behavioral skills to blossom due to the socio-economic background the students belong to.</p> <p>The third is the absence of sound training methods at school. The present school curriculum and training methods are inadequate and do not equip the students to face the real world.</p> <p>The fourth hurdle mentioned was the attitude of parents who are reluctant to send students to places outside Paharganj for training, recruitment and interviews. This is overcome by organizing counseling sessions.</p>
6.	<p>Explained the process through which they reach out to students. Every center has mobilizers who reach out to the local population and to the target sectors .</p> <p>Besides, that, they use cold calling method from existing database and also use student references. They also use conventional marketing strategies like publicity through posters, distribution of pamphlets, etc.</p>

S.No	Ms Rekha
1.	Since she was a trainer for the CCIP (IT related course), she provided insights into the training modules of the course. It was mainly technical in nature and
2.	Discussed how soft skills like punctuality, discipline and personal grooming were encouraged by emphasizing them in the duration of training.
3.	Talked about the great need to develop soft skills because of their demand by prospective employers and how he tried to motivate students in class by discussing the importance of the same.
4.	Gave insights on how Government could step in to fill the huge void that exists in

	soft skill development; life skills classes could begin at Government schools as well as development of English communication skills. This would increase employability of students and reduce need for external training institutes to step in.
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	Person 1	Person 2
Full Name	Ms Rakesh Jha	Ms Sudha
Designation	In-Charge, Centre Administration	Trainer for the Spoken English and Personality Development (SEPD) course
Contact No.	9999055836	-
Time Duration	2 hours (12 noon- 2 pm)	1 hours (3 pm- 4 pm)
Email Address	ileaddelhi@gmail.com	leaddelhi@gmail.com
Notes	Gave an overview of the functioning of the centre as well as helped to interact with students	Gave insights into the SEPD course and the need for the same

	Person 1	Person 2
Full Name	Ms Prerna Kaushik	Students- Lalit Sharma, Sonu Mathur, Ravi Kumar, Khurram, Jigyasa, Amit Saini
Designation	Trainer for the IT/ITes course	Students at the center from the automobile and auto components course and Customer Relations Representative for Retail(CRR) course

Contact No.	-	-
Time Duration	1 hour (12 noon- 1 pm)	1.5 hours (1:30 pm- 3 pm)
Email Address	ileaddelhi@gmail.com	leaddelhi@gmail.com
Notes	Gave an overview of the course she was taking and gave details of the 'All Trade' module on computer skills which she was taking as well.	Gave a trainee perspective and real feedback on efficiency of the modules and training procedure

Discussion Details :

Shri R.K. Jha

1. He was the in-charge of administration of the centre. He gave an overview of the working of the centre and of the structure and work of Aide et Action. It is an international organization which works for social welfare. It has undertaken skill development initiatives and vocational training initiatives among others around the world. In India too, it has a large presence. There are regional offices for the 4 regions who coordinate among the centres in that region. Delhi houses the regional office for the Northern region and has around 12-15 centres under it. The organization has a large presence in Rajasthan with a centre in each district of the state.

He gave details of the centre in Khajoori Khas too. The statistics for placements and alumni career progression were told about. The courses offered and reasons for the same, the batches and their strength were told about. Other details of the workings of the centre were provided.

The centre came under the iLEAD (Institutes for Livelihood, Education and Development) program of Aide et Action. This program was concerned with marginalized populations only and ran courses and outreach programs to enhance the ability to earn an income and improve livelihoods of the people of that area. Self sufficiency was stressed upon.

2. He gave an overview of the funding and working of the centre. It was complementary to building industry linkages. Funding presently came from Microsoft and America India Foundation (AIF). Collaborating with Microsoft helped in the training and industry visits of the students taking the course on IT and ITes. Previously, funding was sourced from German company Schneider as well. This helped in the training and industry visits of students taking training for electricians and mechanics as real world training and feedback was made easily accessible.

3. He explained the training modules which were followed for all courses. Each course ran for the duration of 3 months with the objective of placement after completion with a starting salary of at least Rs 4000/5000. Classes for technical skill training are held and practical learning emphasized. A very important part of the courses structure are industrial field visits. These help the trainees to get an experience of the real working environment. The observation in the visits help the students to tailor their skills and behaviour accordingly and help them to get an idea about the type of skills which are looked for by employers. They also get exposed to the latest technology and latest working methods and styles which are favoured by employers in present times Thus, these visits are a vital part of the training modules.

4. He next talked about the course which was offered specifically for soft skill development.

The SEPD (Spoken English and Personality Development) course stressed on soft skill development. This course came under the category, 'All Trade'. Communication skills and activities to build qualities like confidence, creative thinking and leadership were incorporated in the course. Details were provided by the trainer of the course later. Computer skills also came under the 'All Trades' category. This ensured that students picked up soft skills which would not only help them in their interviews and getting through those but also later in the form of income outputs as well as career progression, as alumni experience had established. These skills helped them to become more productive employees and also ensured that they could take up higher positions in the dealership, outlet or company where they were placed.

5. He next gave the details of the placement process of the program. The centre as well as the organization had linkages and partnerships with various firms in the industries in which courses were offered. This helped in conducting industrial visits as well as placements. Mock interviews and development of skills like communication, personal grooming and formal dressing as well as sector-wise technical skills are emphasized upon in the course, following which complete placement assistance is provided. Post placement monitoring is also present in order to guide the students and help them in case of any adverse circumstances.

Ms Sudha

1. She is the trainer for the SEPD course- Spoken English and Personality Development. She gave details of her course. The main curriculum is decided at the central level. The course concentrates on improving grammar and communication skills. It is done both through theoretical teaching material and through interactive activities like word games, skits and story-telling. The personality development part of the course concentrates on the way of speaking, office etiquettes, formal dressing, behavioural skills, mock interviews, feedback sessions, discipline and inculcating a sense of responsibility. These skills are taught to students of all courses in the centre as they are recognized as important for starting and building a career.

2. She mentioned the type of atmosphere that was striven to be created in the centre for better learning. A congenial atmosphere was sought to be created and friendly relations established between trainers and students instead of a strict attitude in order to cultivate certain soft skills and building positive attitudes among students. This helps in better communication between trainers and students and in solving issues and problems which might exist. This also helps in building desirable personality traits and helps in providing guidance and advise post placement.

3. She discussed the hurdle posed by the background of the students. It is difficult for students to pick up skills and develop certain personality traits. However, a congenial and supportive atmosphere is sought to be built. Also, students are encouraged to pursue their higher education along with their jobs in order to help them in career progression. There is monitoring involved after placements for the initial months as

well as support, guidance and counselling provided if needed.

4 While mentioning the methods of training and content, she expanded on the concept of sector specific soft skills and how they are a part of the curriculum. For example, for Customer Relations Representative (CRR) course as well as hospitality, there are classes and mock sessions for dealing with customers' issues, identifying their needs, recognizing body language, effective communication skills, personal grooming and friendly and approachable attitude. For the students taking the course on IT and ITes, working in a office environment is a must after placements. Therefore, the skills imparted were office etiquettes, formal dressing. Computer skills and spoken English skills are important to all sectors and all students and emphasized upon.

S.No	Ms Prerna Kaushik
1.	<p>She is the trainer of the course for IT/ITeS in the Khajoori Khas center. She also takes the course on computer skills for students of all courses as it is compulsory for all to learn basic computer skills. She gave details of the course being taken by her as well as the component that is compulsory for all.</p> <p>Computer skills were recognized as being fundamental to the building of core skills required for a successful career in any field. According to her, workers in all fields and at all levels require basic knowledge of computers. Retail outlets, hotels and restaurants as well as higher end factories use the same and entry level workers have to operate them for which basic computer skills are not only desirable but necessary. Knowledge of the same increases the value of the trainees in the labor market due to possession of additional skills.</p>
2.	<p>The process of recruitment of trainers was discussed. For recruitment, a detailed criteria of attributes like educational qualifications (diploma or degree), requisite expertise in the field of training, previous work experience in the same area are looked for. Candidates are chosen after a rigorous evaluation and interview process. Many of the trainers are ex-students also who join after gaining a few years of experience in their field.</p>
3	<p>She gave details of the procedure followed when students enroll for a course at the center.</p> <p>Firstly, after initial orientation and interaction, students are classified into 3 grades for the purpose of ease of training, information being with trainers only. 'A' grade is for those who already possess decent communication skills and a developed personality. In such cases, it is mostly technical skills that need to be</p>

	<p>imparted and refining of soft skills is required. The other grade is the 'B' grade where soft skills like communication skills and confidence level is lacking which needs to be worked upon along with technical skills. The last grade is the 'C' grade where all skills need to be worked upon and one has to start from scratch.</p> <p>The second stage is when the skills and aptitude of students is tested formally and also gauged and observed through classroom behavior, counseling sessions, etc. The interest of the student is also sought to be found. According to the interest, students are sorted into courses.</p> <p>The third stage involves vocational training, industrial visits and classes on personality development and communication.</p> <p>The fourth stage is the placement process. Placement assistance is provided to all the students. There are mock interviews, pre-placement skill development classes and specialized sessions for interviews to ensure success of candidates. There is monitoring present after placement as well. Any support which is required by candidates is extended as far as possible. They are encouraged to continue their education alongside their jobs through correspondence.</p>
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S.No	Students
1	<p>They gave inputs on the training procedure in the center and it's efficacy. They were asked about the learning from classroom sessions and industrial visits as well as the relevance of the same. They gave valuable inputs about the efficacy of the training modules and the skills imparted in the same- both technical skills as well as soft skills.</p> <p>The feedback on the activities conducted as part of the Spoken English and Personality Development (SEPD) was obtained. It was very positive. The sessions and the atmosphere created in the classrooms was conducive to the development of confidence levels and spoken English, creative thinking and problem solving abilities.</p>
2	<p>Personal experiences were shared by the students.</p> <p>One of them, Sonu Mathur, was already working before joining the center. He was working in the neighboring Gandhi Market under a contractor for loading and unloading work, earning a salary of almost Rs 3500 to Rs 4000 per month. However, the salary was not stable. Also, there was no scope for career progression or building a career in this field. However, these are aspects he realized after joining the course on auto mechanic training in the iLead center at Khajoori Khas. In the orientation session followed by numerous classroom sessions and counseling sessions, he realized the importance of building a career in a field where there is scope for career progression and building a career through acquisition of skills. Thus, skill development and employment generation initiatives have an implicit positive social change built into them. The interaction with students provided valuable and detailed insights into the hurdles faced by students. There was a lack of education and an absence of a</p>

	supportive environment at home. Also, there was a perception of society that these students could not and should not go out of the local area. These attitudinal problems were to be dealt with first. Skill development is an imperative need was the highlight.
3	Students' perspective on soft skills training was got. All of them agreed unanimously on the point that training was important. Soft skills classes and the activities conducted contributed to the development of confidence levels and communication skills, which had a positive fallout on their overall personality. They considered these attributes to be extremely important for entering the labor market in a few weeks' time and progressing in their chosen field. Also, alumni interaction provided them a greater insight into the need for developing and honing not only their technical skills but also their soft skills.

“The highest measure of democracy is neither the
‘extent of freedom’ nor the ‘extent of equality’ but
rather the highest measure of participation.”
- A.D. Benoist

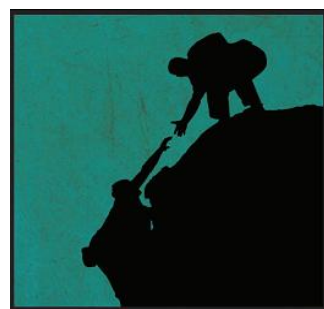
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